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The Feminist Companion to the Bible

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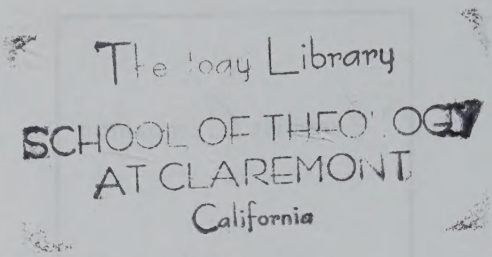

First published by Sheffield Academic Press 1993
Reprinted 1997

Copyright © 1993, 1997 Sheffield Academic Press

Published by
Sheffield Academic Press Ltd
Mansion House
19 Kingfield Road
Sheffield S11 9AS
England

Typeset by Sheffield Academic Press
and
Printed on acid-free paper in Great Britain
by The Cromwell Press
Melksham, Wiltshire

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available
from the British Library

ISBN 1-85075-420-9

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The publishers are grateful to the following for permission to reproduce copyright material: Chr. Kaiser Verlag for 'The Creation Narrative: Genesis 1.1–2.49' by Luise Schottroff from W. Schottroff and L. Schottroff, *Die Macht der Auferstehung Sozialgeschichtliche Bibelauslegungen;* Verlag Herder for 'On the Creation of Man and Woman in Genesis 1–3: The History and Reception of the Texts Reconsidered' by Helen Schüngel-Straumann from T. Schneider (ed.), *Mann und Frau: Grundproblem theologischer Anthropologie;* Scholars Press and the American Schools of Oriental Research for 'Gender Roles and Genesis 3.16 Revisted' by Carol L. Meyers from *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth;* Harvard University Divinity School for 'The Patriarchal Stamp of Scripture: The Implications of Structuralist Analyses for Feminist Hermeneutics' by Pamela J. Milne from *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 5/1; Harvard University Press for 'Beyond Genesis 3: The Politics of Maternal Naming' by Ilana Pardes from *Countertraditions in the Bible;* E.J. Brill for 'Female Social Behaviour: Two Descriptive Patterns within the "Birth of the Hero" Paradigm' by Athalya Brenner from *Vetus Testamentum* 36/3; Ten Have for 'Sarai's Exile: A Gender-Motivated Reading of Genesis 12.10–13.2' by Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes from B. Becking and K.A.D. Smelik (eds.), *Een patriarchale leugen: Het verhaal in Genesis 12 verschillend belicht;* HarperCollins for 'Sarah and Hagar: Matriarchs and Visionaries' by Savina J. Teubal from *Hagar the Egyptian: The Lost Traditions of the Matriarchs;* Polygon for 'Comments on Genesis 29' by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and 'Mrs Stanton's Statements...' by Clara Bewick Colby from Dale Spender (ed.), *The Woman's Bible: The Original Feminist Attack on the Bible;* Methuen for 'Myth *à la lettre*: Freud, Mann, Genesis and Rembrandt, and the Story of the Son' by Mieke Bal from S. Rimmon-Kenan (ed.), *Discourse in Psychoanalysis and Literature;* Vintage Books for the extract from *Totem and Taboo* by Sigmund Freud; Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd for the extract from *Joseph and his Brothers* by Thomas Mann; the Teylers Museum, Haarlem for *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife* by Rembrandt.

ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
AJSL	*American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
BDB	F. Brown, S.R. Driver and C.A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*
Bib	*Biblica*
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar: Altes Testament
BSO(A)S	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental (and African) Studies*
BZ	*Biblische Zeitschrift*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
ETL	*Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses*
GKC	*Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, ed. E. Kautzsch, trans. A.E. Cowley
HAR	*Hebrew Annual Review*
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
IEJ	*Israel Exploration Journal*
Int	*Interpretation*
JAAR	*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JFSR	*Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JPSV	*Jewish Publication Society Version*
JSHRZ	Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, Supplement Series
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
NEB	*New English Bible*
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus
NTS	*New Testament Studies*

OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis
Or	*Orientalia*
OTG	Old Testament Guides
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SBB	Stuttgarter biblische Beiträge
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SJOT	*Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
Str-B	[H. Strack and] P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*
TD	*Theology Digest*
TQ	*Theologische Quartalschrift*
TRE	*Theologische Realenzyklopädie*
TTod	*Theology Today*
USQR	*Union Seminary Quarterly Review*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	*Vetus Testamentum*, Supplements
WTJ	*Westminster Theological Journal*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

INTRODUCTION

Athalya Brenner

Perhaps more than any other biblical text, the texts which comprise the book of Genesis have traditionally been and are perceived to embody cultural emblems. The attribution of emblematic properties to them facilitates their implementation for religious, spiritual, cultural, socio-economic and political ends, a praxis which may be on the decline but is still widespread. An almost common consent concerning inherent, authoritative 'truths' which reside in the Genesis texts informs their emblematization, interpretation and, consequently, utilization as 'authentic', hence powerful, cultural documents. A feminist reader cannot but resist such texts, especially since one of the emblematic 'truths' claimed for them is female otherness and/or inferiority. One can expose the anti-woman bias, or reclaim the text by reading it afresh, or reform it by revisionist approaches. Be the feminist reader's personal perspective as it may, some form of counter-reading is unavoidable when she/he seeks to understand the Genesis cultural emblems and to adapt them to her/his exigencies.

This volume contains feminist critical readings of three blocks of composite textual discourses: Genesis 1–11, especially chs. 1–3; chs. 12–33 and 38; chs. 34 and 39. The thematics and subject matter which constitute these blocks are, respectively: the inception and beginnings of humanity from the creation until the expulsion from the primordial Garden, and immediately beyond it; the great maternal figures—Sarah, Hagar, Rebekah, Leah and Rachel, Tamar; and the tales about Dinah and Potiphar's wife. The emblematic configurations to be examined are mainly gender relations, linked to and determined by visions of human existentiality, by itself and with/vis-à-vis the divine (Part 1);

motherhood and maternity as they are narrativized in the stories about the matriarchs (Part 2); and illicit female sexuality, of the passive and the active varieties (Part 3).

I

Two texts in Genesis are uniquely emblematic in regard to gender relations: ch. 1 and 2.4b–3.24. All but two of the essays in this section are comments on one of those texts or the other, or both. The essays are ordered from the general to the particular and, inasmuch as possible, correspond in sequence to the biblical text. The two departures discuss implications of subsequent Genesis texts for the emblematic nature and language of the first three chapters.

Luise Schottroff's essay on Genesis 1 is historically oriented, for it seeks the historical moment of the text's promulgation; but it is also present and future oriented, for she endeavours to adapt the text's message to contemporary actuality. She proceeds from the goodness of creation and its abuse by humankind, to human perversion of the originally intended equality in the image of God and its transmutation into oppression and power struggle. In her view Genesis 1 signifies that woman and man are equal in life as in God; the conflation of this text with Gen. 2.4b–3.24, and traditional biased interpretations of the 'Fall' variety, are to blame for women's (as well as Others') victimization and domination. A preoccupation with matters of ecology, social equality, justice, liberty and goodness characterizes her work.

Like all translations, a translation of the biblical Hebrew text requires interpretative decisions which are perforce motivated by the translator's circumstances and world-view. Mary Phil Korsak presents her new translation of Genesis into English. She highlights previous anti-woman translating biases by exposing them, then opting for other solutions in her own work. Her own word-for-word, feminist approach is illustrated by examples taken mainly from the first three chapters of Genesis.

Helen Schüngel-Straumann juxtaposes the two accounts of the creation of humans (in chs. 1 and 2–3) and traces traditions of their history, composition and (mainly Christian) exegesis.

Her approach is moored in source criticism and tradition criticism and, therefore, she considers the Garden narrative (attributed to the Yawhistic [J] source, which she dates to the monarchic era) before the creation account (attributed to the younger Priestly [P] source). Her conclusions are that woman and man are equal in the biblical texts cited (their patriarchal background notwithstanding) and in the image of God. However, women have to reclaim this gender equality of image and power from traditional and historical interpretations through a return to the text.

Lyn Bechtel rethinks the traditional, Christian 'Fall and Sin of humanity' interpretation of the Garden text (Gen. 2.4b–3.24) by counter-reading it. Having listed the inconsistencies of morality-motivated interpretations, she classifies the Garden story as a myth of human differentiation, maturation and individuation. The myth is modelled upon stages of human growth—from infancy to maturity to separation from parent(s). Within such a schema, both the acquirement of knowledge (eating from the forbidden tree) and separation (disengagement from God) are inevitable, a result of the built-in conflict which is the substance of binary mythical thought. By the end of the story both female and male humans have become adults—conscious, discriminating, sexual adults. It is the nature of things that they forfeit naivety, dependency and immediate access to God the parent in the 'garden' while gaining independent life elsewhere. The role filled by the textual proto-woman is decisive for this painful, albeit affirmative, process. The notion of bipolar myth is applied to the Garden narrative by Pamela Milne too (see below), albeit through a different critical route and with dissimilar conclusions.

Gen. 3.16 is determinative for understanding the emblematics of gender relations according to the Garden narrative. Carol Meyers and Adrien Bledstein read this crucial verse after their own fashions. Meyers anchors her analysis in a reconstructed historical, archaeological and anthropological actuality of the early Iron Age, whose conditions—as she claims—the text reflects. In that pioneering age, as Meyers sees it, women had to carry the dual load of increased procreation and child rearing on the one hand, and participation in

subsistence chores on the other hand. This double effort awarded women a heightened if obliterated social status, a status which has been perverted within the patriarchal/male process of biblical transmission. Bledstein agrees that Gen. 3.16 is no 'curse' directed at the primordial woman, hence every-woman. No female subordination is implied: woman is cautioned about her attractiveness which, as witnessed by other ancient Near Eastern documents too, is fatal for man. Finally, the comparison of 3.16 to 4.7—God's address to Cain—illuminates 'the sad state of hostility and tension between the sexes which results, ironically, from human aspiration to be like gods and goddesses'.

The readings reviewed so far are analyses *against* tradition but from *inside* tradition, be it Jewish or Christian. In contradistinction, Pamela Milne insists on questioning the emblematic authority of the Garden narrative from the *outside*. She views Gen. 2.4b–3.24 as an example text, and her method is structural. Structural exegeses, especially Jobling's, show that the Garden text is male mythology conveyed, among other things, through the binary opposition of male and female, and that the Bible is almost totally patriarchal. The repercussions of structural analyses for feminist hermeneutics—particularly for feminist revisionist ('reformist' is Milne's term) thought—are serious, since male bias is perceived to derive structurally and directly from the *text* rather than from its *interpretations*. Hence the Garden narrative, like the majority of biblical texts, can be neither redeemed nor rehabilitated by fresh readings. Milne refers to some recent critiques and explains her position further in an Afterword.

Ilana Pardes reads beyond Genesis 3 to chs. 4–5, from creation to propagation, for perceptions of essential (emblematic) femininity in their J and P contexts (see also Schüngel-Straumann). She analyses naming speeches for newborn sons, attributed to Genesis women from Eve onwards, in order 'to make a case for a feminist reconstruction of biblical poetics' which respects the ancient text and is both ideologically and historically valid. Her aim is to underscore the biblical dialogics between patriarchy and (repressed) femininity, so as to help uncover certain constituents of biblical narrative art.

Philip Davies reads Gen. 2.5–9.2 as a chiastic story which begins with the first 'worker of the soil' (Adam) and ends with the first 'man of the soil' of reconstituted humanity after the Flood (Noah). His focal point is the fragmentary passage on the sons of God and the daughters of man (6.12-4), which is placed in the middle of the story. Davies traces the fragment to its presumed mythic origin, especially as it is attested in *1 Enoch*. Recognition of the transmutations this myth underwent in the processes of transmission, embedding, and interpretation facilitates its reading from a minority (female) perspective.

II

The emblematic presentations of Genesis and some other biblical mothers of future leaders share some curious features: centrality of the mother; her alleged barrenness; pairing off of prospective mothers; type-scenes of divine revelation to the mother; and maternal naming speeches, to name but a few. My essay on the patterns of the biblical 'birth of the hero' paradigm constitutes an analysis and classification of this type-story by shared as well as individual features, in order to clarify the mother's role in each pattern and individual narrative. I conclude by briefly considering the gendered authority of each of the two patterns described. A more comprehensive discussion of this issue can be found in the Ruth volume of this series. This general essay is followed by analyses of texts focused on specific matriarchal figures but, because of the shared patterns and recurrent themes, no mother figure can be read in isolation from its counterparts.

Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes compares the story about Abram and Sarai's sojourn in Egypt, where Abram presents Sarai as his sister to his own advantage and to her detriment (Gen. 12.10–13.2), to a recent film about sex exploitation of Asian women imported to Holland. Sarai's silence is read as analogous to the unheard voices of the prostituted Asian immigrants; the victims' respective stories are told and seen, but no hearing is granted to *their* views of the circumstances in which their men have placed them. Sarai's motivation and choice is muted. Her voice has to

be reconstituted by intrigued readers out of its conspicuous absence in the text.

Savina Teubal and Arie Troost proffer perspectives on the pairing off of Sarah and Hagar. Teubal makes a case for Sarah's (and other Genesis matriarchs') uniqueness, for—in her own words—'The narratives of the Sarah tradition represent a non-patriarchal system struggling for survival in isolation in a foreign land'. She defines that system as matrifocal and matrilineal, and reads Sarah's and the matriarchs' alleged 'barrenness' as a matter of occupational (priestly, goddess-inspired) choice. The Hagar stories are separated into two, later conflated, traditions: the tradition of a desert matriarch, and a tradition of Hagar. Finally, Teubal defines the Sarah–Hagar conflict and ensuing separation as a conflict of religious vision rather than of property or the son's inheritance. It is precisely this separation which enables both Sarah and Hagar, and their descendants, to achieve independence of destiny.

Arie Troost examines the story of Isaac's birth and Hagar's expulsion, initiated by Sarah (Gen. 21.1-21), against the superficially inappropriate intertext of the father and son parable (Lk. 15.11-32). This exercise in intertextual reading is anchored in theoretical considerations of female authorship and womanly readership. He rejects a motivation of maternal jealousy and personal quarrel for Ishmael's dismissal from the paternal home in this text, laying the responsibility instead on the incompatible promises made by God to the different participants in the family drama. A legal conflict obtains here between mother's inheritance and father's inheritance; and father's inheritance is the subject of the Luke parable. Troost concludes that, although both narratives are androcentric, the deployment of womanly reading strategies may offset conventional male interpretations of them and of other biblical texts.

Esther Fuchs analyses the biblical betrothal type-scene from Rebekah's betrothal (Gen. 24), in which she plays a central role to Rachel's (Gen. 29), where Rachel is just a love object, and to Moses' (Exod. 2.16-21). Her analysis reveals that the order of presentations constitutes

> a shift in focus from bride to bridegroom and a marked decrease in the bride's status on the level of representational reality... a literary strategy... [whose] purpose is to neutralize, legitimate, and promote the legally subordinate position of women.

One might add that a fourth presentation of this type-scene—where Saul and his servant meet the girls at the city gate (1 Sam. 9.10-14)—is read by ancient and modern commentators as a parody of this same type-scene, a parody which focuses on the satirical description of the young women's stereotypical, female, husband-seeking response to the seemingly eligible stranger.

Adrien Bledstein reads Genesis 27 (Isaac's fraudulently achieved blessing to Jacob through Rebekah's active agency) as a humorous trickster tale. The reading emanates from two working hypotheses: that the story is female authored, and that it can and should be read from a woman's perspective. An analysis of this trickster-type story is followed by its delineation as female literature and the placing of the narrative's date of composition in King David's time. Finally, an analogy is drawn between Rebekah and Jacob's succession story, and the Davidic succession predicament.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Clara Bewick Colby are moralistic voices from the past *(The Woman's Bible)* which are nevertheless still worth listening to. They comment on texts featuring Jacob and Rachel, especially those listing acts of fraud. While Stanton is, relatively speaking, more prepared to acknowledge the immorality of the couple's reported actions, Colby is quick to point out the subsequent negative consequences of these actions. Not surprisingly, Colby singles out 'polygamy and concubinage' as evils that counterweigh noble emotions, like Jacob's love for Rachel.

The last mother to be reread is Tamar (Gen. 38). Pieter van der Horst presents the rewriting of her story in Pseudo-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* (in substance a late first-century CE Jewish *midrash* whose extant versions, as the title indicates, were preserved in Latin). Philo's portrayal of Tamar is worth noting on three counts. She is called 'our mother', thus clearing her conduct of all blame, in line with other Jewish sources. Her hiding of her pregnancy for three months

(Gen. 38.24) is conflated with the hiding of the infant Moses for the same period (Exod. 2.2). Lastly, she is presented as raising her voice against exogamy. The positive reappraisal of her figure in this source, then, surpasses her presentation in the Bible as well as in any other post-biblical source—an example of creative feminist-style reading of traditional provenance.

III

Because the aim of her sexual transgression is the production of a male heir to Judah's line, Tamar barely escapes being labelled 'whore'; she is 'mother'. Female sex outside marriage is a different matter. Dinah has sexual intercourse inflicted on her (ch. 34), and Potiphar's nameless wife wishes to have intercourse with Joseph (ch. 39). The sexuality of both-victim and initiator is largely condemned as illicit, either implicitly or explicitly, in the biblical text itself and in its interpretations. Thus female sexuality and desire, unless informed by the ambition to procreate, is emblematized as illegitimate.

Naomi Graetz examines the status of Dinah as perennial daughter and victim in the biblical and post-biblical Jewish sources. Proceeding from biblical intertexts to Ben Sira and then to various *midrashim*, she illustrates the ambivalence rabbinic sources show towards Dinah's story. (Or, since Dinah is muted, should we say non-story?) She then moves to consider alternative feminist positions vis-à-vis the biblical text. Graetz speaks from within Jewish tradition (see Milne); thus she recommends the utilization of Dinah's story—like other biblical texts—for female empowerment rather than for the mere exposure of the text's and its interpretations' patriarchal bias. The tendency to liberate the text from its traditional exegeses, this time from a Jewish view-point, is essential to Graetz's work (see Schottroff and Schüngel-Straumann for a Christian counterpart).

The last two contributions to this volume deal with the story of Potiphar's wife and her desire for Joseph. Alice Bach rereads *beyond* the biblical story into its interpretation while trying to recover the silenced (muted; see van Dijk-Hemmes) female voice by gendered female reading. The biblical story has gaps;

their filling and interpretation in ancient sources like the *Testament of Joseph* enable Bach to uncover a reconstruction of the (now named) woman's focalization, which is largely missing in the biblical account. The route from biblical to early Jewish, then Muslim, exegeses enables Bach to warn against 'the seduction of the reader into the writer's world, where women are defined in relation to men, that is, by their sexual identity'. Mieke Bal extends intertextuality further afield to the male discourses of Freud, Thomas Mann, and Rembrandt. Psychology and visual art supply illuminating metatexts; Mann's fiction owes much to post-biblical Jewish and Muslim sources (see Bach), but goes its own course. Bal concludes that 'the relation between a mythical unit and its so-called versions is not a relation of interpretation but a relation of transference... dynamic, historically specific and discursive'. An Afterword reflects on Bal's comparative methodology and the tentative nature of its results.

Having read this collection of metatexts on Genesis and its interpretations, what conclusions can feminists entertain? My personal position is close to Pamela Milne's. Presentations of woman in Genesis, and in most of the Bible, are indeed varied, sometimes even positive, often ambivalent thus self-deconstructive. Most of them are emblematic, predominantly stereotypic in their underlying vision of womanhood; on this score, they cannot be saved from themselves. The Bible does document predominantly male perspectives; it does mute female voices. The extent to which it distorts history by elimination is possibly such that a reasonable reconstruction of Early Israel's social realia is probably an impossible task. But the Bible is a burden, the heritage we cannot—or do not want to—shake off. Having said that, I deconstruct my own position by continuing to be fascinated and preoccupied by its texts.

Part I

'At the Start': Emblems of Gender Relations and Human Existence

THE CREATION NARRATIVE: GENESIS 1.1–2.4a*

Luise Schottroff

1. *'And God Saw that it was Good'*[1]

The five books of Moses begin ceremoniously: 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was a formless void, there was darkness over the deep, and God's spirit hovered over the water.' Earth's beginning is dark and disorderly: *tōhû wā bōhû*. These Hebrew words for disorder ('trackless waste and emptiness') have come into colloquial German from this text. The *tōhû wā bōhû* is darkness and confusion, but it is not dangerous or hostile, not a chaos full of horror. The earth is conceived of as a huge ocean with darkness above it but, in contrast to the related Babylonian myth of creation (*'enuma eliš*; cf. Beyerlin 1975: pp. 106-10), the primal deluge is not a personified monster, a power of chaos. The beginning of the earth is God's act: 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth'. This is the heading of the creation narrative which follows. It is thus clear from the outset that God acts unequivocally, powerfully and undisputedly. He does not have to defeat enemies, but merely put an end to the primal disorder. God's *rûaḥ*, his spirit or breath, moved upon the face of the waters. God's *rûaḥ* is presented as a giant mother-bird whose 'wings quietly move', as Martin Buber (1950: 126) explained it to Christians (see also Rosenzweig 1984: 5). Martin Buber was a

* This was first delivered on June 18, 1987 for the 'Refugees and Immigrants' forum of the 22nd Deutscher Evangelische Kirchentag in Frankfurt/Main, Germany. Reprinted from W. Schottroff and L. Schottroff, *Die Macht der Auferstehung: Sozialgeschichtliche Bibelauslegungen* (Munich: Kaiser Verlag, 1988): 8-26.

1. Translations of biblical passages are from *The Jerusalem Bible*.

great Jewish theologian who was not taken seriously by most of his contemporary Christian theologians. He was expelled from the University of Frankfurt by the Minister of Culture and the other professors, and was forced to leave his home, Frankfurt and the Bergstrasse. If Christians today want to understand the meaning of the *rûaḥ* of God, then more can be learned about it from Martin Buber than from many well-established Christian dogmatic theologians who contemplate the trinity. The brooding mother-bird with fluttering wings is God's quickening breath, his invigorating and supportive spirit. Furthermore, God's spirit is neither masculine nor neuter, but feminine.

This ceremonious and distinct story of creation (Gen. 1.1–2.4a) stems from the time when part of the tribes of Israel had been deported to Babylon. The Jewish country had been occupied by the Babylonian superpower since 605 BCE and the population lived a life of subjugation: some in their homeland as peasant farmers who had to pay tribute to their lords; the others, especially the craftsmen, were deported to Babylon in the service of the conquerors.[1] The temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar II in 587 BCE; the city was razed. From that time on, 'Babylon' for the Jews became the symbol for every superpower which oppressed their people in the course of the following centuries. In the New Testament it is the symbol for the Romans' cruel domination. The destruction of the temple at that time determined the history of the Jewish people, through its memory as well as through the fear of repetition.

The story of creation is addressed to these deported Jewish farmers and craftsmen in the country of the Babylonian lords. These writings from the Priestly Code are an attempt to provide a people in misery with a new order and comprehensive cult, a structure which makes a home for the homeless and deported in a manifest relationship to God.

The way people speak about God indicates a great deal about the circumstances of their life, and their hopes. The Creator of the Priestly creation narrative is conceived of as a conscientious

1. The social situation of Jews in Babylon is described in Schottroff 1983: 122-28.

and self-confident craftsman, as a mother-bird, and as a sovereign king.

The creation narrative continues:

> And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

This clear translation renders the peace and sovereignty of the text's modest language. God need only speak, his word creates. This sovereign king also puts his hand to creation: he separates light and darkness. As the owner of his works, he names his creations. Day and night receive their names and belong to God as the product of his word and his hands. 'And the evening and the morning were the first day.' The discrepancy between the clarity and peace of this concept of creation and the filth and noise polluting creation today is distressing. Marianne Katoppo, an Indonesian theologian, has written a poignant description of what has happened to Japan, the country poets described a thousand years ago as the blessed isles of Yamato (Great Peace), a country of crystal-clear waters, blue skies and rolling rice-fields:

> The waters are not so clear any more, and the air is so polluted that people literally die of it. Because of protests from the townspeople of Chiba, the Kawasaki steel company obligingly moved its plant to the Philippines.
>
> Obviously, the fate of Japan is due to a false concept of development, rooted in the attitude of conquest. The Anti-God, who lives on human sacrifice, has instilled these false concepts (1979: 27).

This story can be told all over the world throughout creation.

'And God saw the light, that it was good. And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night.' Sometimes the good light of day can no longer be seen. The worst air pollution is where the poorest people live, for example in Mexico City. But even in Frankfurt the air is sickening. We rich flee to villas in Königstein/Taunus or try to find unscathed creation on the beaches of the Mediterranean or the Third World for three

'priceless' weeks of vacation. Once again I quote Marianne Katoppo:

> There is a beautiful beach in Bali from which you can watch glorious sunsets. Until a dozen or so years ago, the local people mainly earned their living through fishing, and the beach was lined with fishing boats. Now that hotel syndicates have discovered just how lucrative beautiful beaches and glorious sunsets can be, you will not see a single fishing boat. Now people earn their living by providing accommodation to young tourists willing to rough it, and by catering to the older variety who want to eat fresh lobster in comfort (p. 27).

This is also true throughout the world. I flew to Tunisia in order to escape the stinking air in the Rhein-Main area for at least three weeks. But even there I could not roam too far from the tourist area without encountering the unbearable stench of a chemical plant.

Suddenly creation has become a vogue word in Germany. I have even heard it used by power politicians. The Bible says that God's creation is good. Today's status of creation can be described in brief: agony is visible everywhere, the earth is being poisoned, forests are dying, clean water is disappearing. Everyone knows the cause: industrial production. Money is earned with products no one needs, above all, with weapons. Everyone knows the cause but no one seriously believes that the deterioration of creation can be stopped through governmental action. The deterioration will end either in catastrophe, visible everywhere, or...? I do not need to suggest a solution. We all know one: resistance from within, resistance from within. But are we really convinced that this is the answer?

Everyday I arrive at this dead end, alone or in conversations. I love the Bible, but the optimistic beginning of the creation narrative is very difficult for me. It makes me long for crystal-clear water, blue skies, clean beaches and fishing boats. Those deported to Babylon were living under harsh conditions when they told each other this story for the first time. Their reality was poverty in a foreign country, their labour and their professional abilities were exploited, their bodies were overworked and their souls were sad. They were vassals in a strange land for an undetermined length of time; their homeland was lost. They

were worth only as much as their labour. In their longing for their homeland they told each other the story of a marvellous creation, the story of their God, the story of everything they had that could not be taken away or exploited. The realization of its beauty and hope increased in their threatening environment. Creation is still there today, damaged and endangered, but we can still recognize it.

> God said, 'Let there be a vault in the waters to divide the waters in two'. And so it was. God made the vault and it divided the waters above the vault from the waters under the vault. God called the vault 'heaven'. Evening came and morning came: the second day.

The king-craftsman speaks his powerful word and builds heaven as a separation between the ocean below and the ocean above. The text intentionally uses the poetry of repetition. Its language and its poetry express what the text wants to say about God. God establishes a good, distinct and reliable order. In the quiet breath of his sovereignty the second day of creation follows the first. The rest of the creation narrative follows here, in order to demonstrate its poetry of repetition and the structure that, as the narrator implies, holds the world together. We can still see creation in all its glory, even if we are fearful for the future of creation and humankind. We read in Gen. 1.9-25:

> God said, 'Let the waters under heaven come together into a single mass, and let dry land appear'. And so it was. God called the dry land 'earth' and the mass of waters 'seas', and God saw that it was good. God said, 'Let the earth produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants, and fruit trees bearing fruit with their seed inside, on the earth'. And so it was. The earth produced vegetation: plants bearing seed in their several kinds, and trees bearing fruit with their seed inside in their several kinds. God saw that it was good. Evening came and morning came: the third day. God said, 'Let there be lights in the vault of heaven to divide day from night, and let them indicate festivals, days and years. Let them be lights in the vault of heaven to shine on earth'. And so it was. God made the two great lights: the greater light to govern the day, the smaller light to govern the night, and the stars. God set them in the vault of heaven to shine on the earth, to govern the day and the night and to divide light from darkness. God saw that it was good. Evening came and

> morning came: the fourth day. God said, 'Let the waters teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth within the vault of heaven'. And so it was. God created great sea-serpents and every kind of living creature with which the waters teem, and every kind of winged creature. God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, 'Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the waters of the seas; and let the birds multiply upon the earth'. Evening came and morning came: the fifth day. God said, 'Let the earth produce every kind of living creature: cattle, reptiles, and every kind of wild beast'. And so it was. God made every kind of wild beast, every kind of cattle, and every kind of land reptile. God saw that it was good.

And God saw that it was good. He appraised his handiwork like a craftsman. The wealth of creation consoles the poor in a strange land, in Babylon. They talk about their God, about his regal power to create life through his word, and about his ability to create this diversity of animals. This text expresses admiration, enthusiasm and trust toward their God. The people were also aware of destruction. The deportation, the destruction of Jerusalem, these were caused by people in the past as well as in the present. But despite the ruins in their homeland and the poverty in exile, these people praise God for the richness of creation.

There is a Jewish prayer for the Sabbath probably prayed by the first Christians who were Jews—a mediaeval Jewish tradition ascribes this prayer to Peter (cf. Levinson 1982: 57). In this prayer the worshippers merge with creation in praise of God. I have to make myself understand how many desperate Jews prayed this way in the ghetto, how many Jewish men and women had this prayer in their hearts as they were murdered with pesticides in German trucks by German men and women. The prayer says,

> God does not sleep or slumber, He awakens the sleeping, He arouses the faint, makes the dumb speak and frees the imprisoned... You alone deserve our praise. If only our mouths were as full of song as the sea, our tongues as full of exultation as the roaring of the waves, our lips as full of praise as the endless firmament, our eyes as gleaming as the sun and the moon, our hands extended as the heavenly eagle, and if only our feet were as light as gazelles: it would not be enough

> to praise You, God, our God...and to praise Your name once for the thousands upon thousands of times you have done good (Hirsch 1978: 94).

Let us praise God's good creation and his justice even now, knowing what humankind has done to the water, air, animals and trees. God has kept us alive up to now. He has given us eyes to see the entire magnificence of creation. He has given us feelings so that even now we can sing exuberantly about the beauty of creation. He has given us a heart to protest against injustice and exploitation.

2. *Images of God*

> God said, 'Let us make man in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves, and let them be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle, all the wild beasts and all the reptiles that crawl upon the earth'. God created man in the image of Himself, in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them. God blessed them, saying to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and conquer it...'

What western industrial society has made out of this text is perfectly clear: the concept of conquest and oppression of creation and humankind. Animals and foreign nations are hunted game when the capitalist master comes. All natural resources, the earth, animals and humans are objects of his so-called economic enterprise and rapacious attacks. Beasts of prey are harmless, the masters are not. Crocodiles or lions are harmless, *homo sapiens* is not. He is a voracious liar filled with endless greed. Entire populations are killed for a slight power advantage. For two years around the time of Christ, two Jewish rabbinical schools (the disciples of Hillel and Shammai) discussed whether it would have been better if humans had never been created. They finally agreed it would have been. However, since they had already been created, they should reflect on their earlier deeds and carefully consider their future deeds (*b. Erub.* 13b; cf. also Hertzberg 1983: 257). Therefore, as we can learn from these old Jewish Rabbis, the right way to deal with the narrative of humanity's creation can be found only by restructuring our daily lives. *We can live either as masters, or as*

images of God. This creation narrative states that God is the king of creation, and it says that men and women should be royal children able to participate in God's creation. Humankind's domination over creation is not meant as subjugation or exploitation. Rather, the fruits of the earth should feed humankind, the earth should be inhabited by humankind as a place of growth, fertility and life. On earth men and women have been made by God in his own image. Therefore the Jews deported to Babylon spoke about themselves and their God in these words: we have been created in the image of God. The entire creation narrative is actually nothing but a reflection on the relationship of humankind to God. Sun, moon, day, night, animals and trees—everything is our home, wonderfully furnished for the royal children. This is how those people speak who have in mind kings such as Nebuchadnezzar, who razed Jerusalem and destroyed the temple. The prisoners praise God.

The contradiction between humankind's bloodthirstiness and lust for power, and their creation in God's image, has compromised the concept of humankind's creation in the history of the Christian church. It has been said from the time of Irenaeus (see Schwanz 1973: 117ff.) in the second century CE that humankind has lost part of its *likeness* to God, *similitudo/dᵉmût*, while retaining the *imago/ṣelem*. An aspect of God's image has remained, although corrupt. Or it is claimed that the true image of God, which has been lost, can be restored through faith in Christ. All these dogmatic Christian concepts are intended to form a chronicle of salvation history: Creation, the Fall, Christ, and New Creation. They are presented chronologically and conceptually. The resulting notion of humankind is that of a helpless, undignified and incapable being. Biblical tradition (the Scripture of Israel as well as the New Testament) has a different concept: it emphasizes the relationship of humans to God in their individual contexts as a practical event. From the perspective of human history, I can only reach the same conclusion as the rabbinical schools of Hillel and Shammai: it would have been better if God had left humankind out of creation. But, as the rabbinical schools express with their pithy conclusion, we should not rack God's brains, but our own, in regard to what we have done and what we are going to do. This means that the

question cannot be to what extent we are, or could possibly be, images of God; but, very simply, if we live as images of God or not. I would like to relate a few stories from Jewish and Christian tradition which would help us to live as images of God.

In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount it is said,

> Do not worry about your life and what you are to eat, nor about your body and how you are to clothe it... Look at the birds in the sky. They do not sow or reap or gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they are?... And why worry about clothing? Think of the flowers growing in the fields; they never have to work or spin; yet I assure you that not even Solomon in all his regalia was robed like one of these. Now if that is how God clothes the grass in the field which is there today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, will He not much more look after you, you men of little faith?...(Mt. 6.25-34).

You are images of God. God takes care of the plants and the animals; God will also take care of you. How much more, the conclusion *a minore ad maius*, from the lesser to the greater, is a prerequisite for our Creation narrative. The deprived Jewish men and women of Jesus' time were overwhelmed by their concern for survival. Hunger has a destructive power. The followers of Jesus tried to resist this power by sharing their food and by encouraging each other to trust in God who clothes the lilies growing in the fields more splendidly than the kings could robe themselves in their purple. Even rich Christians in industrial countries can apply the text of the Sermon on the Mount to themselves: do not worry about your life, but set your hearts on the kingdom of God. Do not let yourselves be subjugated by the power of anxiety and desire, and greed for money, power and natural resources. God looks after the lilies of the field, how much more will he look after us, his images. The self-assurance and trust in God, which come to us as God's images, free us from the compulsion to want to be the greatest. This compulsion destroys the lilies of the field.

There is a rabbinical story based on the Creation narrative, reflecting on what can be said when God's images become arrogant: 'Why was man created on the sixth day, after all the

other creatures? So that he could be told, should he become arrogant: "The gnat was created before you were"' (*b. Sanh.* 38a; see also Hertzberg 1973: 250). The gnat and the lilies were created before we were: we live as images of God if we deduce from the gnat our liberation from greed and worry, not our capitalist dominance.

Hillel, the Jewish Rabbi and contemporary of Jesus, told a parable which acquaints us with another aspect of trust in God, stemming from our likeness to him. Old Hillel said goodbye to his disciples at the end of his lecture, but accompanied them for a few steps. They asked him, 'Rabbi, where are you going?' He said to them, 'To follow a commandment'. Then they said to him, 'What kind of a commandment?' He answered, 'To bathe in a bathhouse'. They asked him, 'Is this a commandment?' He replied, 'Yes, since the image of kings in theatres and circuses is cleaned and washed by imperial servants, and even such servants behave nobly with the aristocrats of the Roman Empire, then how much more should I, made in the image and likeness of God, (be washed), since it is written, "in the image of God God created man"' (*Lev. R.* 34.3; cf. e.g., Fiebig 1912: 7-8).

The statues of Caesars in theatres and circuses are cleaned and cared for because they are the images of Roman Caesars. I am God's image, how much more must I be cleaned and cared for. The self-confidence of God's images enables them to put the statues of Caesar in their place. In the Roman Empire the statues of Caesar were not only washed, they were worshipped. They were the governors of Caesars in the province, representing the presence of their power and their claim to domination. But I am the statue of God, God's representative on this earth. The statue of Caesar is nothing compared to me, the child of God. Hillel's evening bath became a demonstration of human dignity and political analysis. These are the inimitably concrete stories of Jesus or Hillel, from which we can learn how to manage our likeness to God.

Some Jewish Rabbis have said that the likeness to God is a greater general principle in the Torah than the commandment to love your neighbour (see Str–B, I, 358-59). And thus Christians and Jews thought, 'You should not say: Because I was despised, therefore my neighbours should be despised along

with me... If you do this, know that he whom you despise is the one God has created in his own image' (*Gen. R.* 24[16]; cf. Jas 3.9).

Do we live as images of God or do we live as masters? The creation narrative leads us to this practical question.[1] The question is not eliminated by the early Christian analysis of the world, according to which sin and death rule the world. The road of divine imitation is not blocked. God believed humankind to be capable of imitating him: 'God created man in the image of Himself, in the image of God He created him'. God has given us the power of justice and a heart that can love. Sin cannot destroy God's gifts. The first Christians said, God has broken the power of death through Christ's resurrection. He has remained true to himself, he has renewed his gift to us to live as God's images.[2]

Therefore, how to live as images of God, how to imitate God, is a practical question. Nowadays Christians are thinking a lot about a new lifestyle. Homemakers have to be informed about poisons in commodities and groceries. Responsible homemakers try to buy environmentally safe detergents. We try to cut down more and more on the use of plastics and we try to use public transport instead of cars. This is certainly right. But it hardly alleviates the problem. We try to eat more fruit and vegetables, but they are imported from countries where monocultures are planted for the needs of industrial countries. These make the land permanently infertile and preclude its use for the nourishment of the local inhabitants. When some of them flee to us because of political and economic misery, we torture them with our arrogance and bureaucracy, and deport them more often

1. 'One cannot construct another image of the Almighty than this: Our own life as a representation of His will. Man and woman, created in His image, are meant to imitate His mercy. He delegated to mankind the power to act in His place. We are His representatives when we relieve suffering and bring joy.' (Heschel 1980: 225). This is the closest paraphrase of the thoughts obtained in Gen. 1.26ff. that I have found in theological literature.

2. The Pauline concept of sin does not mean that Paul thinks the creational likeness has been lost; cf. Schwanz 1973 The contrary position is taken up by Jervell (1960).

than not. The new lifestyle has limitless ramifications. Injustice cannot be sufficiently overcome in our kitchens and apartments. I remain a colonial mistress even if I live as responsibly as possible. But that should not mean that we return to throwing away plastic dishes and non-returnable bottles without restraint.

Do we live as masters or as images of God? It is a practical question posed by the creation narrative. I believe there are two orientations which can help us to organize our lives: listening to the voices of victims, those who are afflicted: and openly resisting the intrigues of industry and its decision makers. I shall begin with the second point. The naivety of Christians, assuming the best intentions on the part of others and wanting to be open to everything, has become almost criminal. We are lied to by the managers of nuclear power plants with regard to the effects of nuclear power on humans and animals. This always becomes obvious when the truth is told publicly—recall, for instance, the conflict involving the TV broadcast *Report* in the spring of 1987. The church in my country, at least those in authority, hold the view that they should maintain the dialogue with industry. All these arguments were repeated when the Deutsche Evangelische Kirchtag closed its accounts at the Deutsche Bank because of the bank's policy in regard to South Africa. Fortunately, a governing board made the right decision for the first time. This decision is a precedent; other decisions should follow, for example, against nuclear power plants or for a church policy of asylum, in which the church provides an inviolable sanctuary and legal immunity for all refugees.

These decisions will hurt us all, while we are fighting for them and even after they have been made. Industry is much more powerful than a few Christians. We do not need to be deceived any longer by the pseudo-arguments that the church would lose members and that our decisions would cause unemployment. A more just society that protects its environment is feasible and realizable.

The other orientation is the voice of the afflicted victims. This begins with everyday situations. Whoever gives students poor grades has to listen to their views on the matter. The governing boards of churches should not pass judgment on feminist theology, but should enter into dialogue with women in feminist

groups. We should not speak maliciously about refugees, but rather speak with them. Then the prejudices stemming from our fear and egotism will disappear.

Learning to live as images of God is not hopeless at all. It is possible to imitate God, to incorporate his justice and love into our lives.

3. *Women and Men*

'Male and female He created them', the first creation narrative states. And God blessed the first couple: 'Be fruitful and multiply'. For the Jews exiled in Babylon, having many children was an aspect of liberation. Whenever God's people were oppressed, they understood fertility as God's special blessing. In this creation narrative men and women are images of God in the same way. But in the history of its interpretation much anti-feminist nonsense has been inferred from this text, unfortunately even by Paul. With this text he argued the superiority of men over women: only man is the image of God; woman is not directly related to God, but only to man.[1] Another form of interpretation is also not especially comforting for women: man and woman together, as complements, are God-like (Barth 1947: p. 218ff.). This interpretation means that patriarchal marriage with its factual inequality is firmly established, although this is not directly stated. Where are the many single men and women in this interpretation? A third tradition of anti-feminist interpretation arises from a combination of the two creation narratives and from a new exegesis of the 'Fall'. In this interpretation the likeness to God is the original condition lost through the so-called 'Fall'. The 'Fall' is primarily Eve's fault, and her submission to man and her pain are understood as divine order.[2]

1. 1 Cor. 11.7. Here Paul assumes an extremely anti-female position within the Jewish discussion. This position was also held by some Jewish scholars but definitely not exclusively so. See Jervell (1960: 110-11) who, however, evaluates the Jewish tradition incorrectly and inexplicably. Küchler (1986: 85, n. 38), unfortunately, follows Jervell.

2. F. Cruesemann: '...er aber soll dein Herr sein' (Gen. 3.16) 'Die Frau in der patriarchalischen Welt des Alten Testaments', in Cruesemann and Thyen 1978: 64-68. An example of an anti-female interpretation of

However, according to the text (Gen. 3.16-19), the misery of men and women is viewed by God as a disorder, a wretched reality which is contrary to the original intention of the Creator, who joins man and woman in equality and justice (Gen. 2.4b-25).

It was important to me to mention these anti-feminist exegetical traditions and to point out the significance of a feminist perspective.

Women are not the only victims of domination, but they are indeed victims. Therefore, it is necessary to adopt the feminist perspective if you, whether you are a man or a woman, contemplate God. And it is important not to play off one victim against another by saying, for instance, that consideration of the misery of refugees is not a feminist concern. It is a genuine feminist concern because women endure the fate of refugees too and have to suffer a doubly intense burden, as women and as refugees. Feminist concerns arise from a vision. It is a vision of justice among peoples. Justice shall reign between black and white, between men and women. All people are created equally in God's likeness. There shall be neither poverty nor wealth. The end of racism and class oppression is also part of the feminist vision.

Zephanya Kameeta, a South African freedom-fighter, has paraphrased Psalm 133 as follows:

> See how fine and sweet it is to be healed from the destructive disease of racism and separation
> And to live together in harmony as God's people.
> God's spirit will fill the hearts and the spirits of all people.
> Nobody will be judged by race or skin color anymore,
> But all will be governed in justice and law.
> War will end,
> And the entire population will rebuild the country.
> No one will talk about skin color anymore,
> Because everyone is considered a child of God,
> Whom He created in the image of Himself.

Gen. 3.16-19 is to be found in Keil 1983 (1878): 75: 'Moreover, woman has exceeded her God-given relation to man; not only has she emancipated herself from man in order to obey the snake but, furthermore, she has even lured man into sin. For that she is punished with *t*^{e}*šuqâ*, an almost pathological craving for man... and obsequiousness toward man'.

And this will be the beginning of what the Lord has promised:
Life without end (Kameeta 1983: 36).

Our rivers are poisoned
Our forests are dying
The cancer rate of our children is increasing
WE ARE IMAGES OF GOD

Our history is poisoned
We have murdered the Jews among us with pesticides
Our politics and economy are poisoned
We still exploit the Third World like colonial lords
WE ARE IMAGES OF GOD

Our hearts are poisoned
We still feel culturally superior to others
We oppress those different from us, refugees and our critics
WE ARE IMAGES OF GOD

God has created us to live before His eyes
He made us beautiful, almost as beautiful as angels
He made us intelligent, almost as intelligent as angels
We are able to imitate God
We are able to love
We are able to see through lies
We are able to fight injustice
WE ARE IMAGES OF GOD

God gave us a heart which is courageous and revolts against injustice
God has given us feelings so that we can praise the beauty of the trees
God gave us ears to understand the language of the birds
WE ARE IMAGES OF GOD

Excerpt from the Jewish hymn *nišmat kol ḥay* ('The Soul of all Living'):

If our mouths were full of song like the ocean; our tongues full of rejoicing like the murmur of the waves; our lips full of praise like the spacious firmament; our eyes full of illumination like the sun, like the moon; our arms extended like the eagle in the sky; and our feet nimble like the gazelle—It would not suffice for us to glorify You, God, our God, our Father God, to praise Your name for the thousand upon thousands of times you have blessed our fathers and us.

GENESIS: A NEW LOOK*

Mary Phil Korsak

The title of the book presented in this article is *At the Start...Genesis Made New: A Translation of the Hebrew Text* (Korsak 1992). As the title itself suggests, Genesis here takes on a new look. My purpose, in the first part of this article, will be to explain what is meant by this. This new English version has been prepared over a period of nine years. The work involved can be compared to that of an archaeologist. It is technical, fiddlesome, demanding. To some it would appear irksome. But for me and others of my kind (meaning other professional translators) the humble task of unearthing, scraping and refitting words together exercises endless fascination. During the first stage I will ask you to bear with me, as I walk you round my self-appropriated site, indicating guide-marks and putting a few isolated words before you, hoping that you will share my enthusiasm for my finds but aware that they may easily appear small and even tedious.

The second part of the article will make suggestions about the interpretation of the text, proposing a new look at Genesis from the reader's point of view. As this is a contribution to the *Feminist Companion to the Bible*, special attention will be given to specific words in the first chapters of Genesis whose interpretation has had an influence on the position of women in our culture.

By way of an introduction to the translation, a quotation will allow me to comment first of all on the layout of the text:

* This article is adapted from a paper delivered to the section 'Feminist Thought and Biblical Interpretation' of the Society of Biblical Literature at its International Meeting in Rome, 15 July 1991.

Elohim said
We will make a groundling (Adam)
in our image, after our likeness
Let them govern the fish of the sea
the fowl of the skies, the cattle, all the earth
every creeper that creeps on the earth
Elohim created the groundling in his image
created it in the image of Elohim
male and female created them
Elohim blessed them
Elohim said to them
Be fruitful, increase, fill the earth, subject it
Govern the fish of the sea, the fowl of the skies
every beast that creeps on the earth (1.26-28).

The text is not presented in a traditional prose form but is set out like poetry. Each traditional verse has been divided into several lines in a pattern that echoes the spoken rhythms of the Hebrew text. To achieve this as objectively as possible, I first listened to readings of the text, recorded by Abraham Abouna (Jerusalem), and then sought for confirmation of what I had heard by referring to the disjunctive and conjunctive accents as noted in the *Biblia hebraica stuttgartensia*. This break-down into shorter entities is also related to the content of the text. As Hebrew thought progresses step by step, each line carries the reader (or listener) forward by adding a further element to the message. The inherent structure of the text is thus apparent in the layout proposed here. Finally, the correspondence between message, structure and layout makes punctuation, which does not exist in the Hebrew text, largely superfluous in the target language also.

Generally speaking, the text is divided into units of meaning in the traditional manner (cf. RSV; Speiser, 1962; JPSV). Such divisions render it easily accessible to the eye and the understanding.

Particular attention has been paid to the translation of names, which are meaningful in Hebrew. Where a name whose meaning is important for understanding the content of the text occurs, it is translated into English. It is then followed by a bracket containing the name in its familiar Anglicized form:

> The groundling called his woman's name Life (Eve) for she is the mother of all the living (3.20).

The meaning attributed to a name is based on popular etymology which links words through sound. The advantage of the solution proposed here is that the sound link between the name given and the reason advanced for giving it comes across clearly in the text itself. Translators traditionally relegate this connection to footnotes. The JPSV, to quote one example, translates:

> The man named his wife Eve because she was the mother of all the living (3.20).

The connection between 'Eve' and 'the living' is not apparent to the reader without reference to a footnote, which gives Hebrew *ḥawwâ* and *ḥay*.

A translator's task is made up of choices which involve weighing up losses and gains. The gain is rarely total. If something is won here by avoiding a footnote, the adding of a bracket is admittedly not an ideal solution. Fortunately the bracket is only needed once, when the name first appears in the text. Subsequently, the Anglicized name is used in the traditional manner, as in Genesis 4, for instance, which begins,

> Adam knew his woman Eve (4.1).

Sometimes the translator is helped by a fluke. This is the case for the name Seth:

> She called his name Seth
> 'for God has *set* another seed in Abel's place
> yes, Cain killed him' (4.25, italics mine).

But this is an isolated case, where sound and meaning can be made to correspond in English, as they do in Hebrew.

While speaking of names, mention must be made of the word 'groundling'. This word too is presented as a name in Genesis 5:

> Male and female created them
> and blessed them
> and called their name Groundling (Adam)
> on the day of their creation (5.2).

I will come back to *'ādām* again later.

Divine names have been treated in a different way. Elohim,

Shaddai and the tetragrammaton YHWH, for instance, have been maintained in the English text, because they relate specifically to the God of the Hebrews. Equivalents are proposed in the footnotes. In a note to Gen. 2.4, where the tetragrammaton occurs for the first time, I have pointed out that this name is not pronounced. As is well known, scholars have not come to a satisfactory conclusion as to its pronunciation or its meaning. To leave it as it stands is to respect its transcendent character, in keeping with Hebrew tradition.

The translation is presented without a commentary. Explanatory notes are at best revealing, at worst pernicious. In her book *Le sacrifice interdit* Marie Balmary (p. 34) shows how an understanding of the biblical message is commonly formed by footnotes which are proposed to and imposed on the reader, with the result that they often create a barrier between reader and text. For the reader or student who wishes to acquire further knowledge about Genesis a vast number of independent commentaries exist.

A last general point about the translation. It is a major one. A great deal of study has gone into the vocabulary of Genesis. The purpose of this study has been to find a word in the target language capable of corresponding to a given Hebrew word in all its contexts. This challenge was first taken up by Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig in German, by Edmond Fleg and later by André Chouraqui in French, more recently by Everett Fox in English and by Mirja Ronning in Finnish. A team of scholars known as 'The Amsterdam School' is currently working along the same lines in Dutch. My point of contact with this 'school' of biblical translators has been the French translation of André Chouraqui (1982). His version of Genesis convinced me that this new way of treating vocabulary is viable, at least in the biblical field, even if I have thought it best to distance myself from his method of work in some other respects.

After this general introduction, I wish to comment further on the title of the book and then to draw attention to the translation of some individual words to illustrate more precisely how the question of vocabulary has been dealt with.

As stated above, the title of this version is *At the Start...*

Genesis Made New: A Translation of the Hebrew Text. 'At the start' is the translation proposed here for the first word of Genesis, the first word of the Bible, *bᵉrē'šît*. In keeping with Hebrew tradition, the first word or phrase of the book is also its title. Traditionally, *bᵉrē'šît* is translated as 'In the beginning' but I have preferred 'start' to 'beginning': (1) because it suggests a space-time dimension and not just time; (2) because it suggests an initial impulse which sets all things in motion; (3) because it is unfamiliar and gives the reader a bit of a start! But this translation will have achieved nothing if it does not help some readers to read the text with fresh eyes. A refreshing of the vocabulary may help in this way, provided the translation is exact. It is not possible here to dwell further on *bᵉrē'šît*. According to José Eisenberg, the word has been interpreted in 700 different ways (Eisenberg and Abécassis 1978: 10), more than enough to discourage a translator at the outset!

'A word for word translation.' What does this imply? Can an English word do the work of a Hebrew word, covering all its shades of meaning in all its different contexts? At first one answers No! Yet the 'school' of translators I have referred to and the translations they have produced seem to answer Yes! Everett Fox sums up this new approach when he claims that such translators translate what the text 'says', as compared to what it 'means' (Fox 1983: xiv). By its very faithfulness to the given word, this way of translating strikes unfamiliar chords, creating different harmonies from those we are accustomed to.

Two examples will illustrate this point. The verb *yālad* illustrates the complexity of the choices involved when one works on vocabulary in this new way. *yālad* means 'to bear, to bring forth, to give birth'. Already when expressing the woman's parental role, English has different shades of meaning. But *yālad* also expresses the man's parental role, usually translated by 'to beget'. *yālad* is used of the man in the *qal* form, as it is for the woman. When man is the subject, it also has a *hiphil* form, meaning 'to beget of a wife, to cause to bring forth'. 'To beget' could cover all these meanings. Theoretically, 'to beget' can be used of both parents, and up to the seventeenth century it also covered the *hiphil* meaning, 'to get with child'. Unfortunately, 'to beget' is no longer common usage, though

Bible translators tend to stick to it for the man's role, for want of a better term. There is a further element to bear in mind: *yālad* is also used of animals. When Jacob fiddles the genetics of Laban's flocks (30.39 and 31.8) they 'brought forth' and 'bred', according to the RSV; they 'bring forth' and 'drop', according to E. Speiser and the JPSV. Added to all this, *yālad* is used transitively and intransitively. Traditional translators seem to be winning! How can a single English verb reflect all these shades of meaning? By framing the question in this way, I have already suggested an answer. Animals provide the clue. 'To breed' is transitive and intransitive, it is used of animals, and if humans are ready to share a common verb with them, as the men and women of Genesis do, it can apply to men and women indifferently. Hence, for example, the rendering of Elohim's injunction to the woman as

> With pains you shall breed sons (3.16).

It may be said, in passing, that there are many details in this version of Genesis that lend themselves to an ecological interpretation. The literal character of the translation creates an immediate contact with the Hebrew source, which itself conveys a sense of oneness about the universe, a connectedness, as seen here, between animal and human for instance.

The same root *yālad* in the word *tôl^{e}dôt* founds a further link between the human and the universe. *tôl^{e}dôt* is traditionally translated as 'generations', here as 'breedings'. It is first used of the universe in Genesis 2:

> These are the breedings of the skies and the earth at their creation(2.4).

It is later used of *'ādām*:

> This is the record of the breedings of Adam (5.1).
>
> Adam bred in his likeness, after his image
> He bred sons and daughters (5.3).

The breedings of Noah, the breedings of the sons of Noah, the breedings of Shem, of Terah, of Ishmael, of Isaac, of Esau, of Jacob! A single root links animal life, human life and the life of the universe. It is in this way that the literal and systematic

translation of a word suggests cross-connections that are not always apparent in traditional translations.

It is more difficult to discuss the translation of the Hebrew word *'ādām* because the meaning of this word undergoes various shifts in the first four chapters. This is not an isolated phenomenon in Genesis. Israel, for instance, is the name given to Jacob in 32.29. It is also the name of a people:

> Israel settled in the land of Egypt
> in the land of Goshen
> they acquired property in it.
> They were fruitful and increased much (47.27).

Similarly Joseph is the name of one of Jacob's sons but it is also the name of Joseph's descendants Ephraim and Manasseh. When Israel extends his hands to the heads of these boys to bless them, we read,

> He blessed *Joseph* and said...(48.15).
> The God before whose face my fathers walked
> bless the boys! (48.16, italics mine).

The Septuagint makes a correction here and substitutes 'them' for 'Joseph'. This is probably logical for an ancient Greek or a modern European but is not necessarily the way a Hebrew would see things. Three verses later Israel says of Manasseh,

> He too will become a people (48.19).

The whole of Genesis 49 illustrates similar shifts of meaning from man to clan.

No-one will deny that this kind of shift occurs with the name Adam. It will readily be conceded that *'ādām* sometimes refers to the representative of humanity, sometimes to a man, father of Cain and Abel. *'ādām*, the representative of humanity, is also usually rendered in English by the term 'Man'.

The shift of meaning from 'Man', meaning humankind, to 'a man' must however occur at the right moment. The reader's perception of this shift is guided by clues within the text itself. If in translation it occurs too early, affected by an androcentric bias, the message of the text is falsified. In Gen. 1.26-28 (see above), Elohim (the Hebrew name for God) is plural. The 'we' and 'our' of 1.26 echo this divine plurality. That the human

creature is also plural is expressed in the 'them' of 1.26. The nature of human plurality at this stage is then clearly stated in 1.27: 'male and female [he] created them'. The male and female aspects of the human are further confirmed in 1.28, when Elohim speaks to them-as-can-only-be-fruitful-when-together, to express myself in Pickwickian fashion, and says,

> Be fruitful, increase, fill the earth (1.28).

In 1.29 the 'you' of 'Here I give you' is also plural. At this stage Elohim addresses a couple, not an individual.

I suggest that an androcentric bias affects this passage in certain translations when, for instance, Ephraim Speiser in English, or Emile Osty in French, adapt 1.26 as follows:

> Let him (not them) subject the fish of the sea (1.26).
>
> Qu'il (sing. not plural) domine sur les poissons (1.26, Osty and Trinquet 1973).

I have tried to parry this tendency by translating the third person pronoun by 'it' and not 'him', after Phyllis Trible (1978: 75-82), when in the initial stages *'ādām* represents the potential human couple that ancient Jewish tradition calls the androgyne. When man, the male, appears as an individual separate from the female, and he does this concurrently with the first appearance of woman in 2.23, the masculine form of the possessive adjective appears:

> The two of them were naked
> the groundling and *his* woman
> they were not ashamed (2.25, italics mine).

The masculine form of the pronoun is maintained in the following verses until the couple is expelled from the garden. Then, in 3.22, I revert to 'it', which refers once more to the couple, now differentiated. Obviously Eve is expelled along with her man. Current translations, like that of the RSV,

> The Lord God sent *him* forth to till the ground from which *he* was taken (3.23) (italics mine).

are once again misleading. I propose, therefore,

> Elohim sent it away from the garden of Eden to serve the ground from which it was taken (3.23).

Another passage to be commented on is 2.18-20, which seems to evoke an intermediate stage of human development. It is clear in this case that the 'groundling' is not the human couple. It is characterized by a deficiency.

> It is not good for the groundling to be alone
> I will make for it a help as its counterpart (2.18).

The 'helpful counterpart' suggests something like a missing cotyledon in a single pea. When Elohim sees the groundling alone, Elohim says it is *lō'-tôb*, 'not good'. This contrasts with *tôb mᵉ'ōd*, the 'very good' that expressed Elohim's satisfaction after the creation of the human couple in Genesis 1. Here again translations tend to be androcentric. The RSV, for example, translates,

> I will make *him* a helper fit for *him* (2.18).

Where, in the RSV, the same phrase 'a helper fit for him' occurs again, the NEB translates,

> But *for the man himself no partner* had yet been found (2.20) (italics mine).

The JPSV translates,

> But *for Adam no fitting helper* was found (2.20).

One is tempted to ask, 'Got your apron, Eve? Take a suitable one!'

It will be clear from the above that I find myself in disagreement with translators who interpret *'ādām* to mean 'humanity' or 'mankind' in the first chapters of Genesis. However, a further shift of meaning justifies such an interpretation in Genesis 6:

> YHWH said
> I will blot out the groundling I have created
> from the face of the ground
> from groundling to cattle
> to creeper, to fowl of the skies
> for I am sorry that I made them (6.7).

Here *'ādām*, the 'groundling' refers to the human race.

I cannot leave *'ādām* without saying something about the translation 'groundling'. The sound link that binds *'ādām* and

'ᵃdāmâ is not to be ignored. In the first five chapters, the word *'ādām* occurs 28 times, the word *'ᵃdāmâ* 16 times. I propose the translation 'groundling' and 'ground'. 'Earthling' would have been a happy solution but 'earth' was needed for *'āreṣ* and, if one plays this vocabulary game, one English word can only correspond to one Hebrew word, not two. Having tested 'ground' for *'ᵃdāmâh* in its other contexts and having found it viable, *'ādām* became 'groundling'. In his French translation, André Chouraqui uses *glébeux* and *glèbe* (1982: 37ff.).

Part of Jewish tradition and much of Christian tradition has presented Adam as a male, woman as Adam's rib and so on. Moreover, the male image has been projected onto God. If we let ourselves listen without prejudice to chords struck by Genesis, they produce different harmonies:

> Adam lived 130 years
> and bred in his likeness, after his image
> He called his name Seth (5.3).

When Adam breeds in his likeness, after his image, he breeds a son, like himself. When God makes a groundling,

> in our image, after our likeness (1.26)
> male and female created them (1.27).

The human has a twofold aspect, male and female. This tells something not only about the human couple but also about images of God, which, at the level of the divine, suggests interesting speculation. Unfortunately that is beyond the scope of the present article.

Besides the word *'ādām*, there are other words in the first chapters of Genesis whose translation might be considered pertinent to feminist thought. First the word *ṣēla'*. I have translated it by 'side' not 'rib' in Gen. 2.21-22:

> YHWH Elohim built the side
> He had taken from the groundling into woman (2.22).

Elsewhere in the Bible, *ṣēla'* has the meaning 'side' as in the 'side' of the tabernacle, or 'side' as in 'sea-side'. It is only in this context that translators introduce the word 'rib'. In keeping with the method described above, I propose 'side' for *ṣēla'* here

as elsewhere. The meaning 'side' is also well supported in rabbinical commentaries.

Feminists today, both men and women, may well prefer the connotation 'side by side' to the notion of woman being made as an afterthought or, as a British song put it with humorous exaggeration, 'from one of the left-overs'!

I do not wish to suggest that the vision that invented this particular Genesis myth was concerned with feminist issues. In my opinion, the basic equality of human beings appeared as natural to this mind as the oneness of the universe. The myth hinges on another issue: the main point is surely that archetypal woman is said to be born of archetypal man, the deeper implication being that of a man's relationship with his woman companion is not to be confused with his relationship to his mother. In its own fashion, the text protects Oedipus. That this is the intention is confirmed by what follows in the text:

> So a man will leave his father and his mother
> he will cling to his woman
> and they will become one flesh (2.24).

The relationship man–woman is said to supersede the child–parent relationship. This law appears all the more baldly stated if one considers that, according to the story, neither father nor mother yet exists.

The re-insertion of Eve's name into the text, translated as 'Life' in 3.20 is also important from a feminist viewpoint. If the name Life is relegated to a footnote (see above), the tendency is to put the emphasis on the word 'mother'. The JPSV reads,

> The man named his wife Eve because she was the *mother* of the living (3.20, italics mine).

When the name Life appears in the text followed by the clause explaining why the name is given, the reader spontaneously and correctly links 'Life' and 'living' and the emphasis shifts:

> The groundling called his woman's name *Life*
> for she is the mother of all the *living* (3.20).

The age-old tendency to confine woman to her roles of wife and mother is one that rankles with feminists. By giving her the name Life, Genesis pays a great tribute to woman. This name is

linked through its root to the tetragrammaton. I am sorry that Phyllis Trible got so upset over Adam's naming Eve at all that she concluded that the name is ironically given (1978: 133). I can only think that sometimes one's own pain interferes with one's understanding.

This brings me to the translation of *'iṣṣābôn* and *'eṣeb* as 'pains' in 3.16-17:

> Increase! I will increase
> your pains and your conceivings
> With pains you shall breed sons (3.16).
>
> Cursed is the ground for you
> With pains you shall eat of it
> all the days of your life (3.17).

Prestigious translations have tended to emphasize here 'suffering' for the woman, 'achievement' for the man. So the influence of the Septuagint, 'I will greatly multiply thy pains and thy moanings' (3.16) has extended itself to the NEB, for instance:

> To the woman he said,
> I will increase your labour and your groaning
> and in labour you shall bear children (3.16).
>
> And to the man he said
> With labour you shall *win* your food from it (3.17).
>
> You shall *gain* your bread by the sweat of your brow (3.19, italics mine).

Where the NEB has 'win' and 'gain', the Hebrew text has, in both cases, simply 'you shall eat'. Just as there is a touch of the subhuman here in the words addressed to woman, there is a hint of superman in the words addressed to man. One wonders whether women feminists, who wish to defend their human dignity, will also encourage men to liberate themselves from the obligation to perform?

The Hebrew text draws a parallel between the pains/or labour of woman and the pains/or labour of man. Pains means effort for both but productive effort for both. She will bear sons, he will produce crops. The interpretation of what happened in the garden as a crime/punishment story leads to a wholly negative reading of the divine words here. That the forbidden fruit

represents the experience of *good* and bad is quickly forgotten. Consequently, just as it generally escapes one's notice that the terrible curse inflicted on the serpent is merely that it should be a serpent, it also escapes one's notice that for a woman to breed sons was seen as a positive experience in the Hebrew world, even if it was at the expense of labour. Think of Hagar's superiority complex (16.4) and Leah's joy and gratitude (29.32-35; 30.17-20) when they conceive and give birth. This is not to deny that the birth process could mean death for the mother. Such was Rachel's case (35.18). But giving birth was seen to correspond to woman's desire (30.9) and to have 'seed' or descendants represented fulfilment for her (16.10), as it did for a man.

Similarly, the literal translation of the words 'you shall eat', addressed to the man, echoes the 'you shall eat' of 2.16, recalling that eating is in itself a positive experience, even when, as here, it is at the expense of labour and a struggle against weeds.

The end of 3.16,

> For your man your longing,
> and he, he shall rule you

has made many a feminist unhappy. This is not surprising when one looks at some translations. The Septuagint reads something like,

> And your submission shall be to your husband and he shall be your lord (3.16)

and the Vulgate,

> You will be under the power of your husband and he will be your lord (3.16).

In the Hebrew text the longing of woman for man suggests sexual desire. There is a corresponding phrase with an inverted meaning in the Song of Songs (7.11). In a word for word translation the verb 'rule' echoes the previous use of the verb in Genesis 1:

> Elohim made the two great lights
> the great light for ruling the day
> the small light for ruling the night
> and the stars

> Elohim gave them to the vault of the skies
> to light upon the earth
> to rule the day and the night
> and to separate the light from the darkness
> Elohim saw How good! (1.16-18).

This lovely comparison calls for no commentary!

The time spent with Genesis and the clues provided by specific words suggest ways of receiving the text that I like to think are close to the way in which it was first perceived. During the nine years spent in its company I have learned to love this book and it is that love that I wish to share with men and women. Feminism, to my mind, must benefit both women and men by helping to restore harmony where it has been lost. It concerns women in particular where androcentrism has become institutionalized as, for instance, in the Roman Catholic church, of which I am a member.

On the Creation of Man and Woman in Genesis 1–3: The History and Reception of the Texts Reconsidered*

Helen Schüngel-Straumann

1. *Introduction*

The texts of Genesis 1–3 are not a unified whole. Genesis 1 was written by a different author, belongs to another period, and shows an appreciation of theological problems that is newer than that of the older reports of Genesis 2–3. This is well known and widely acknowledged. One should, however, always keep in mind that a naive interpretation of the Bible, one that takes the texts literally and mistakes the chronological order of reported events for a historical one, has its (however hidden) effect up to this very day. Similarly, there is a tradition of more than 2000 years and a history of the text's reception which foster anti-woman arguments from which we are still suffering today. These arguments were seldom inherent in the texts themselves; rather, and for various reasons, they were propagated through a long and complicated history of interpretation. That is why everybody reading or listening to these old texts, even a theologian, is, to some extent, biased, as evidenced everywhere in handbooks, dictionaries, essays, and so on.[1]

The authorship of Genesis 1 is generally agreed upon. This chapter is, by common consent, attributed to the Priestly source (P) and dated back to the Exile or shortly afterwards. This easily

* Reprinted from T. Schneider (ed.), *Mann und Frau: Grundproblem theologischer Anthropologie* (Freiburg: Herder, 1989): 142-66.

1. Cf. the article on 'Adam', in *TRE*, I, 414-37. There is no article on 'Eve'. All statements concerning women are included in the Adam article, and in another article called 'Woman' (*TRE*, XI, 417-69).

dated source forms, due to its theologically pregnant content and meaning, the skeleton for the Pentateuch, and is given flesh from other, older sources. Thus, Genesis 1 came to be placed at the beginning of the Bible. More difficult is the dating of the older Yahwistic source (J) of Genesis 2 and 3. The date of this source's origin is questionable (although its characteristics are not too complicated to define). Although some exegetes still assign it to the tenth century BCE, the period of the so-called Solomonic Enlightenment, others would wish to ascribe it later, to the time of the kings, some even as late as shortly before the Exile.[1] There is no general agreement on the dating of J, and I do not wish to discuss this subject here. Later I shall mention some arguments in favour of a later dating, as my exegesis of Genesis 2 and 3 suggests. Let us just note here that it seems certain that J belongs to the time of the kings, for it contains several recurrent paradigms; whereas the time of the Exile was one of breakdown followed by renewal of all theological orders and structures.

This historical placing of the origin of both sources means that all traditional arguments which are based on a chronological sequence of Genesis 1 and 2–3 are rendered worthless. Nobody can possibly regard the so-called story of the Fall or the Garden as a further explanation of Genesis 1, as has been the case in the past. We must face up to the fact that even a chain of interpretation of 2000 years' standing may be, quite simply, false.

After these introductory remarks, I should like to divide my essay into two parts. The first part will deal with the reception history of the man–woman theme, although only as it is presented within the Bible. I shall not discuss the many anti-woman traditions handed down from the Fathers of the Church, through the Middle Ages, to our century.[2] The second

1. Cf. Schmid 1976 on the problems of the J source. A survey of the recent discussion is given in Zenger 1980. The latest editions call attention to the different datings ascribed to J.

2. A particularly crass example of how the texts of Genesis have been referred to, even in our century, in order to deny women human nature, is quoted by E. Gössmann (Archiv für philosophie- und theologiegeschichtliche Frauenforschung), IV, p. 23 and the following chapters. The following quotation is taken from an essay by Max Funke (a Schopenhauerian), entitled 'Are Women Humans? Mulieres

part will be a short summary of the actual statements of the texts themselves. I shall only refer to those passages specifically relating to women, especially those not yet mentioned in the regular commentaries.[1]

2. *On the History of the Man–Woman Theme and its Reception*

a. *Genesis 2 and 3*

Beginning with the older texts of Genesis 2 and 3, I should like to answer the question: why could these narratives be used to make women responsible for humankind's sin and evil? There were two major stages leading to this. The first was the interpreting of the Fall in such a way, that the woman's role in it was seen to be greater than the man's. The second was the generalization, *one* woman equals *all* women. In the (Christian) Old Testament there is an indication of a negative interpretation of Genesis in regard to 'The Woman' in the book of Sirach, but this remains the only instance. This late book (from the early second century BCE) contains a sentence which is almost inevitably quoted in all anti-female traditions: 'Of the woman came the beginning of sin, and through her we all die' (Sir. 25.24, AV). Sirach is not included in the canonical books of the churches of the Reformation. It is part of the Septuagint but not of the Hebrew canon. In the so-called Wisdom Literature the woman problem plays an important role. Most of these later texts and writings, which offer advice and help for definite times and situations, are full of anti-woman sentiments. Warnings against the scarlet woman, against adultery, and so forth are very common topoi in this sort of literature, just as in other ancient oriental testaments. This genre is common to all oriental

homines non sunt' (1910), p. 56:

> Did not a woman call Adam's fall; did not woman seduce the Angels Barut and Arut; did not a woman incite pious David to the murder of Uriah; did not a woman send chaste Joseph to gaol . . . ? And when God drove Adam and Eve out of paradise, he 'called to the man' and asked him, 'Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?'—If God had regarded Eve as a human being, he certainly would have asked her this question as well.

1. I should like to call special attention to the well-known commentary by C. Westermann (1974).

cultures and was carried much beyond the imagination of earlier centuries. To a large extent, the genre stems from old oriental sources, mainly Egyptian. One must not forget the part such didactic literature played in life, especially for the practical education of male adolescents. To understand such statements as universally valid dogmas about 'The Woman' is to miss the point completely.

The above-quoted verse from Sirach is, however, only the tip of the pre-Christian, literary iceberg. There exists a great number of apocryphal stories, with words of wisdom or apocalyptical content, many of which are preserved in Greek. None of these writings delivers anything new, but they tend to interpret things old and traditional by giving them a new dimension. The whole literate world spoke Greek by then: the traditional Hebrew texts were only understood by a minority, and a real need for new interpretations arose. Due to the changing *Zeitgeist*, everything had to be open-minded and up-to-date. Any trends that might be in the air were taken up and viewed through the eyes of the old traditions. Not long afterwards the writers of the New Testament, especially the letter writers of the second and third generations, explained our Genesis texts with the help of those ancient patterns they already knew. All authors of this period merrily try their hands at this sort of thing, with no fixed canon binding them as yet! Thus, the writers of the New Testament took up the original Hebrew texts, but fell back upon early Jewish–Hellenistic interpretations, which I shall have to characterize in greater depth now.

In order to comprehend this tradition of interpretation, this *Zeitgeist* of the late classical period, I will go back to the post-doctoral thesis of Max Küchler. This New Testament expert minutely examined why the writers of the New Testament interpreted the texts of the traditional Bible in such a way as to read them 'against the grain', that is, at odds with the original intention of the author (in this case the Yahwist, Küchler 1986: 125). Küchler gives a detailed description of two mainstreams of this later period, which led to a re-interpretation of the older reports: the first eroticizes the old texts, the second demonizes *erōs* and beauty.

Remarkably, those texts in which women are involved are chosen for continual re-interpretation. These literary women's roles are exaggerated in a way not justified by the original texts. This is done against a backdrop of those classical trends which always show an anti-body and anti-woman attitude of some sort, and always display a dualistic colouring: woman is always assigned to the side of body/matter and regularly identified with *erōs*. The choice of texts for new interpretations falls invariably on those in which a woman or women play(s) a part, for example the story of the Garden, and the myth of the sons of God and the daughters of man in Gen. 6.1-4. In the Hebrew Bible, let us remember that the editor indeed places this latter text before the Flood narrative in order to illustrate the increase of sin on earth. Nevertheless, the women in his narrative play no active part: they are the victims of the sons of God.[1]

The classical period interprets the story differently: now the earthly women seduce the divine figures; now women are the active party. The heavenly creatures must guard themselves against being seduced. There are countless stories of this nature in the apocryphal literature, since at the time around the birth of Christ there was an extraordinarily high interest in the inhabitants of heaven. Stories of angels and demons, among them the story of Lucifer's fall, belong to this genre and period. The New Testament instruction for women to wear veils must be seen against the background of such an exegesis of Genesis: women must cover their heads lest they should become dangerous to the angels![2]

1. Gen. 6.1-4 (NEB):

> 1 When Mankind began to increase and to spread all over the earth and daughters were born to them,
> 2 the sons of the gods saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; so they took for themselves such women as they chose.
> 3 But the LORD said, 'My life-giving spirit shall not remain in man for ever; he for his part is mortal flesh: he shall live for a hundred and twenty years'.
> 4 In those days, when the sons of the gods had intercourse with the daughters of men and got children by them, the Nephilim (giants) were on earth. They were the heroes of old, men of renown.

2. Cf. the commentaries in Küchler 1986: 73-112.

The influence of Hellenistic thinking brought about a characteristic shift of emphasis. Whereas in the Old Testament beauty is an epithet of Yahweh (good/beautiful are not differentiated in Hebrew, both are designated by *tôb*), and is equally used for men and women who were especially chosen by God (David was a particularly beautiful man; Sarah, the progenitrix, a particularly beautiful woman), in this later period beauty is increasingly regarded as something dangerous and belonging solely to women. The combination of beauty and seduction becomes very popular. This is why such emphasis is laid upon the rejection of jewellery of all shapes and sizes, and why the veil gains so much importance.

Of the numerous apocryphal stories circulating at that time a few should be mentioned here, as they offer examples of extremely negative interpretations of Old Testament textual traditions: the book of *Jubilees* with its conspicuously tendentious exegesis of the Adam and Eve story (Hebrew copies of *Jubilees* were found in Qumran, proving how widely the book circulated in certain ascetic circles and confirming its pre-Christian origin). Furthermore, *1 Enoch*, especially its Ethiopic version, and the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, parts of which are dated as late as the beginning of the Common Era, were used and supplemented by Christians.[1]

In addition, there existed a series of stories entitled the *Life of Adam and Eve*, which in the Latin version tended to idealize Adam and place the sole cause of evil upon Eve. Eve goes so far as to ask Adam to kill her, for the loss of Paradise is her fault. Thus, male self-justification is put in the mouth of a woman! Concerning the names Adam and Eve, it remains to be said that they are a product of this late misinterpretation, resulting from the translation into Greek and Latin, whereas the original sources speak of 'man' and 'woman' without using proper names.

1. For these Apocrypha, including the so-called deuterocanonical books like Ecclesiasticus or the 'Wisdom of Jesus son of Sirach', there is now a new academic German edition (Kümmel 1973–). Some of the volumes relevant for this topic have not been published yet. Thus we have to go back to the older collection of texts by Riessler (1928) and Kautzsch (1900).

Let me give one more example where this tendency to eroticize and demonize becomes evident, with all its devastating consequences for all women. In ch. 5 of the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* Reuben, the eldest of Jacob's sons, gives the following last instruction:

> 1 Women are evil, my children, as they have no power over men, they lure them with their beauty. 2 And if they cannot bewitch them with their beauty, they outdo them with their scheming. 3 For God's Angel spoke unto me thus: women succumb to the spirit of whoring more willingly than men. They contrive in their hearts to scheme against men. They confuse their minds with jewellery. They poison them with their eyes, then capture them with their deeds. 4 For a woman cannot overcome a man openly, she beguiles him with her harlotry...[1] (Also cf. *Jubilees* 33).

Here we find an accumulation of the then popular combination of jewellery, beauty and seduction, as well as the affinity of 'Woman' and sexuality. This quotation is typical, since in the original text, referred to by Reuben here, the woman plays no active part in the disgraceful deed—Reuben had taken possession of his father's concubine while she was asleep(!) and while Jacob was away. Nonetheless, the Hellenistic erotic interpretation of this later period blames the woman and her erotic aura for the crime. The same pattern can be shown in countless reinterpretations from those early centuries.

The actual theological problem in the epistles of the New Testament, which derive from this milieu, does not stem from the original text taken from the Old Testament. It is the choice of texts (the Bible has always been read selectively) together with their interpretation against the background of the above-mentioned understanding, which often contradicts the original text. Let me quote another of the epistles, 1 Tim. 2.8-15, which also underlines such tendencies.[2] Here the woman is introduced as a second-rate creation; she is the only one seduced (cf.

1. According to the translation of Becker (1970: 37); cf. Küchler 1986: 442-43, 171-72.

2. M. Küchler's translation of this text shows the meticulous structure of the epistle and the importance of the argumentation for the letter writer.

Küchler 1986: 9ff.), thus ranking first in the order of sin while second in the order of creation. The literary sequence is changed to a chronological one, which is part of the classical interpretation of the text. The next step, however, is an evaluation of the chronological order, as is also the case with the old tradition. This is against the kerygma of the J source (cf. Küchler 1986: 19). For the statement of seduction a selection is made from Genesis 3, which not only does not accord with the Old Testament text but even contradicts it. The term 'seduction' is used in Genesis 3 only by the serpent, not by the woman. That only the woman committed the sin, as stated in 1 Tim. 2.14, is quite clearly a misrepresentation of the Yahwistic text. Moreover, the sequence in v. 15, 'She shall be saved in childbearing', implies an erotic kind of sin. According to the *talion* principle, the punishment must be in kind, a 'measure for measure' for the sin committed. The meticulous structure of the Timothy pericope suggests a sexual transgression of Eve with the serpent. Quite a number of apocryphal texts are solely concerned with the explicit description of Eve's sin as sexual intercourse with the serpent (*nāḥāš*) is masculine in Hebrew). Some apocryphal writings even mention the birth of Cain as the 'fruit' of this intercourse (e.g. Küchler 1986: 19, 48).

In 1 Cor. 14.33b-36 there is a late insertion which demands the subordination of the woman in quite an extreme fashion. It refers to a sentence from Gen. 3.16, one of the so-called 'curses'. Here the original early Jewish interpretation of aetiological penal laws is suddenly changed into a command, which is a complete reversal of the original statement. Although all recent commentaries deal quite explicitly with the problem of this quotation—it is almost universally accepted that Paul did not write this himself—it is still used against women today (especially in the liturgy)![1]

b. *Genesis 1*

In Genesis 1 there is only one passage which involves the woman, that is, the statement on the creation of man and

1. Cf., e.g., Klauck 1984: 104-106, and the literature cited by Küchler 1986: 54ff.

woman in the image of God (1.27). Nevertheless, in the Hellenistic traditions we are not confronted only with the text itself, but also with a whole host of developments and interpretations. The first important obstacle to a proper understanding of this passage is the fact that the term *'ādām* was used by P in the collective sense of 'man'[1] or 'humankind'. In the Hebrew text P never refers to *'ādām* as an individual: this is not questioned by exegetes. Still, early Jewish interpretation read *'ādām* in Genesis 1 as a proper name, due to a misinterpretation of the J texts in Genesis 2 and the following chapter. There Adam and Eve are seen as individuals, and that is why *'ādām* becomes an individual in Genesis 1 also through interpretation, and, consequently, becomes *a man*. Besides, the Greek translation renders *'ādām* as ἄνθρωπος wherever it is not used as a proper name. Although this means 'human being' and includes women, in popular Hellenistic philosophy only the male is regarded as an ἄνθρωπος in the full sense of the word. So, quite frequently the statement on the creation of man and woman in Genesis 1 is perceived as referring to the man only, however subtle the exegesis may be. The word 'image' (εἰκών) is applied solely to the male; God's εἰκών is apparently only a human being in a full sense, namely the man.

There are also rabbinic interpretations denying the god-likeness of the woman; others grant it in a lesser form. Some of those are indeed free-wheeling and even fanciful. Such interpretations often fasten on to the (grammatical) difference between singular and plural in the original text of Gen. 1.27:

> And Elohim created man (*'ādām*) in his own image, in the image of Elohim he created *him*; male and female he created *them*.

The change of object in the last sentence, which, in Hebrew, may be logically derived from a collective meaning of the grammatically singular term *'ādām* and its development into 'male and female', led to a negative interpretation for the

1. The terms 'man' or 'mankind' which I sometimes use here, especially in the translation of specific passages, are inclusive. Their usage should not conceal the fact that both genders are referred to by these terms.

woman. There is also another tradition in early Jewish exegesis which regards the first human beings as *androgynous* creatures, with the male characteristics always playing the dominant part (i.e. the man always has the frontal face; the woman displays god-likeness only when together with the man in these interpretations, while the man possesses it also on his own and outside this tradition!) I shall ignore here these interpretative trends as well as the Gnostic concepts and the Nag Hammadi texts (some of which also have a positive Adam tradition that is, however, strongly dualistic). Here I shall confine myself to those interpretations which continue to have an effect in the New Testament and transmit a tradition which is negative towards women.[1]

The Jewish philosopher Philo undoubtedly played a crucial role in the philosophical architecture and further development of such thoughts. He combined the statements of Gen. 1.26 and the following verses with the Logos: the ensuing construct had grave consequences, especially for the further mingling of philosophical ideas with New Testament ones. Whether or not this constituted a direct influence on the New Testament is of little importance; what counts is the summary of the traditional body of thought which was then worked into a philosophical system incorporating Greek concepts.

I shall deal here with some examples from the New Testament in which these early Jewish interpretations are taken up. The exegesis of the New Testament is yet again selective in confusing the traditional interpretation of Genesis 2–3 with that of Gen. 1.26 and the following verses. This process of mingling interpretations, telescoping them into one another, leads to discrimination against women. Thus, the anti-woman features of the ancient tradition have a snowball effect.

The moving force behind the Christian tradition was Paul, insofar that he combined ancient interpretations of Genesis with his Christology. Paul introduced the typological pair of opposites: Adam–Christ (Rom. 5), first human and perfect human,

1. More on this problem area in Jervell 1960 and Schaller 1961; on pp. 187-90 Schaller lists all instances from the New Testament with allusions to, or interpretations of, Genesis 1 and 2.

the first bringing sin into this world, the latter salvation. This typological concept must see Adam as an individual, as it also sees Christ as a person, a human being. Since Christ is male, Adam is, accordingly, male too. 'The woman' does not even enter this comparison, although this does not become immediately apparent.

Paul adopts Jewish tradition in several places, particularly in 1 Corinthians 11, where he constructs a hierarchy which quite distinctly diminishes the god-likeness of 'the woman'.[1] In his hierarchy of descent only the member at the top, the male, is God's image in the full sense. God is the original, Christ his actual image. Christ is the head of the man, who is the head of 'the woman'. Thus, a line of descent ensues from it: God, Christ, man, woman. Against the backdrop of the anti-female interpretation of Genesis 2–3, which Paul combines here with the above-mentioned early Jewish interpretation of Gen. 1.27, he jumps to a conclusion which is not in accordance with the original text of Genesis 1: Paul says something different from the P source.

The meticulous construction of 1 Corinthians 11 shows that Paul is not concerned with a mere question of decorum only. Very few other New Testament passages contain so many chains of argument. Looking more closely, it seems obvious that Paul does not use the original (Hebrew) passages from Genesis but the Greek translation, the Septuagint; and he uses those traditions which misinterpret the change from singular to plural in the Hebrew of 1.27, arguing that women are godlike to a limited extent only. Paul made use of this interpretation, which is derogatory towards women, since it fitted his Adam–Christ typology nicely. The devastating theological consequences for the Christian image of women are widely known.[2] Of all the Pauline statements (and there are others I do not wish to discuss here), this one was destined to become so momentous! Max Küchler examined these and some other passages in the letters

1. Cf. the text in Küchler 1986: n. 5 and its exegesis, pp. 73ff.

2. Cf. the numerous, unfortunately very scattered, papers by E. Gössmann on anthropology in the Middle Ages, especially the 10 volumes in progress in the series Archiv für philosophie- und theologiegeschichtliche Frauenforschung (vols. 1-4 have been published so far). They comprise evidence, documentation, and female counter-traditions.

of the New Testament and asked why the anti-woman arguments were so powerful. He concluded that it was

> because of an exegesis created by men for men, which interpreted and retold the Bible to women's disadvantage. These exegetes seized every chance to interpret any peculiarities in form or content in such a way that women were kept in their place regarding their conduct and position, but also their confidence and their rights, thus presenting the Biblical-Jewish ethics as God's plan of creation (Küchler 1986: 114).

Before I start on the actual content of the Genesis texts, I should like to ask why the anti-female arguments lasted longer in the Catholic tradition and today still have stronger effects there than in the Protestant one. I want to formulate five possible reasons briefly. In the Catholic tradition:

1. The Old Testament as a whole is held in lower esteem than the New Testament.
2. Progress in research on the Old Testament is generally slower.[1]
3. Fixed dogmas are derived from the anti-female tradition.
4. A closer affinity with tradition implies amplification and utilization of the many anti-woman remarks uttered by some Fathers of the Church and mediaeval authors; this is far less so in the case of Protestant theology, which relies more strongly on the Hebrew sources.[2]
5. The liturgy has a greater influence[3] through its repetitive texts than in the Protestant tradition.

1. There is no Roman Catholic scholarly commentary on the Old Testament in German!

2. The Septuagint contains more anti-women texts than the Hebrew Bible; thus quite a few arguments from the Bible (Ecclesiasticus!) do not apply to Protestant theology.

3. Occurrences of anti-woman texts which are still in use in the liturgy should be examined in detail, although they are undoubtedly biased (for example in the readings of the Pastorals). Thus interpretations of the Bible which express contempt for women are being reinforced. This is especially damaging for those women who neither read nor listen to biblical texts apart from those they hear in the liturgy. See Procter-Smith 1985: 420-27, mainly quoted in American literature.

3. *Texts*

a. *Genesis 2–3*

Once again I shall start with Genesis 2 and 3 for practical and historical reasons, since the more recent text of Genesis 1 is meant as a theological correction of the J narratives. These tales must by no means be regarded as isolated texts. They are part of the more comprehensive complex of the original story, in which the author unfolds humankind's addiction to sin in its various guises. One story alone is not enough to describe this addiction to its full extent, hence the use of several approaches. Men and their acts of violence play an important part in all these tales of sin: Cain, Lamech, the sons of the gods and, finally, the men who build a tower 'with its top in the heavens' (NEB), making a name for themselves. Tradition's choice fell on the first story for reasons already mentioned: because a woman plays an active part in it.

Notably, the original story is told aetiologically for the most part, differing greatly from historiography in its genre and intention. The framework of creation right up to the Flood was prescribed for both biblical authors by old oriental sources. What counts is what is being made here of the old traditional texts, that is, how the given material is being re-interpreted and transformed. (This is the case not only in regard to J, but also to P.)

Fortunately, we find a similar myth concerning the beginning of history in Ezekiel 28, a myth which deals with *'ādām*. *'ādām* lives blamelessly on a mountain of God and is put in a garden. *'ādām* sins (out of arrogance), *'ādām* is banished by a guardian cherub. The text of Genesis 2–3 is also based on this older pattern as far as the traditional history is concerned. However, J transforms this myth. The core of the J narrative contains the term *'ādām* ('man', 'mankind'), created from the *'ᵃdāmâ*. *'ādām* is given a command, disobeys it, and is driven from the garden. Anything else is added by J, which means that what he is really interested in is the woman! The verses on the creation of the woman, the dialogue between the woman and the serpent, and the so-called curses do not fit into this context. What is new in the J text?

1. *The Creation of 'The Woman' (Gen. 2.18-24).* Genesis 2 is told aetiologically. The whole scene is orientated towards v. 23, the so-called formula of relationship:

> Now this, at last—
> bone from my bones,
> flesh from my flesh! (NEB)

At last the man has found a more suitable companion than the animals. Yahweh's act of creation is described in detail. He takes a rib and 'builds it up into a woman' (for the creation of the man the verb 'to form' was used). The word for 'rib' (*ṣēla'*) is perhaps derived from a Sumerian play on words, in which the corresponding term means 'life' as well as 'woman'. The aetiological aim of the text accounts for God's using a material other than the one used for the creation of *'ādām*: thus the relations between the sexes are explained descriptively. The question, 'Which material is more precious—the *'ᵃdāmâ* or the rib?'—is futile. In both cases, in the creation of *'ādām* and of the woman, Yahweh is the sole creator. The scene does not depict a birth, as is written in many popular feminist interpretations, as if the man pretends to produce the woman. Indeed, mediaeval artists often depicted the scene in this manner, but J does not. *'ādām* plays absolutely no part in the act of creation as he is fast asleep.

Another misunderstanding of this text concerns the term *'ēzer*, 'help'. A closer look at the word reveals that it does not imply anything subordinate, like the help of a maidservant. The masculine word *'ēzer* is used here in lieu of the more common feminine form *'ezrâ*. *'ēzer* is applied to God in half of the references dealing with the kind of help that man cannot give, as Trible has pointed out (1973). And that help is not limited to an assistance in producing children, something the text does not even mention.

The J narrative must not be seen against the background of our modern way of asking questions, but against its contemporary environment (cf. the materials in Lieberman 1975). Its statements diverge considerably from the ancient oriental myths. For one thing, no tale from Mesopotamian literature has ever been discovered dealing solely with the creation of women. In the Gilgamesh epic a woman (a prostitute) is 'used' only for a

short time to make a human being of the hero. Afterwards he teams up with men again. The woman has only to serve a single purpose there, whereas J regards her as a permanent, equal partner, corresponding to the man as a genuine counterpart.[1]

Both man and woman are created by God and gifted for a joyous, permanent living together. One interpretation of the Song of Solomon tries to read this as an explanation or illustration of this God-given togetherness (cf. Trible 1973). The text of Genesis 3 tells us that things are not like that *de facto*.

2. *The So-Called 'Fall'*. Genesis 3 tries to state reasons why the life of humankind is determined by suffering and limitations. This text is particularly concerned with the original relationship between man and woman, whereas Genesis 4 demonstrates the relations between brothers. Sin or its origin is not explained. It is a description without the naming of a guilty party.[2] Thus, to ask whether the woman is to be blamed for the origin of sin is to miss the point completely. The dialogue between the woman and the serpent is added by J. The complete texts of Genesis 2 and 3 talk of Yahweh-Elohim, whereas the term Elohim is always used on its own within the dialogue. It is not known whether J discovered this masterpiece of a well-turned phrase, or whether he invented it himself. And besides, the main character is in fact the serpent, not the woman.

Traditionally there is a great variety of different interpretations of the complex Serpent–Tree–Seduction, since the serpent is a heavily symbolic animal in the positive as well as in the negative sense. In the Gilgamesh epic there was already a serpent furtively eating the hero's herb of life from the rim of the well.

As an animal that sheds its skin, the serpent becomes a symbol of life as well as death. The interpretation of the later tradition, which views the serpent as the devil or Satan, is explicitly

1. If J really dates back to the period of Solomon, it is extraordinary for that period in its emphasis on a one-to-one personal relationship. Polygamy was the rule then, after all. This could be an argument against dating this text back to such an early period.

2. Thus also the general phrasing of the command not to eat the fruit of a certain tree: there is no emphasis on anything moral or ritual.

excluded by the first sentence of Genesis 3. There it is described as an animal created by Yahweh-Elohim, a creature, not a divine hostile power. The latest interpretation of the serpent as a symbol of the Canaanite fertility cult, which also symbolizes the Canaanite Baal and his sexual potency, seems the most convincing. Moreover, the Hebrew for serpent is masculine (*nāḥāš*). During the times of the kings the dispute with the Canaanite cults became extraordinarily vehement. The male Baal was the great counterpart to Yahweh, Israel's God. That is why J relegates the serpent to a subordinate place.[1]

Two notions remain to be explicitly refuted: first, the transgression mentioned here is not of a sexual nature. Secondly, the woman cannot be called 'seductress'. Only of the serpent is it said in definite terms that it 'tricks' (= 'deceives').[2] Woman and man eat *together* from the forbidden tree, although, it must be admitted, the woman eats first and then the man follows her example.

But why does J allow only the woman to deal with the serpent? Where is the man? This is anchored in given patterns of old oriental iconography. Urs Winter and Silvia Schroer have illustrated, with a vast amount of pictorial material, that the tree is always combined with a woman, originally with a goddess. Tree–Serpent–Goddess belonged together as a fixed

1. This further supports a later dating, since during the period of Solomon this dispute is hardly perceptible. It increases about the time of Hosea. What is extremely difficult to understand is the damnation of the serpent at the end of Genesis 3, considering that the bronze serpent was worshipped in the temple of Jerusalem until the reign of Hezekiah towards the end of the eighth century BCE; cf. 2 Kgs 18.4.

It is certainly of importance for the exegete to determine at what time J was written. The material and its embedding in a certain period is made valid by the way the author chooses and arranges it according to his own situation. This does not imply that statements only hold true for particular historical situations. I would assume that the author wants to describe something basically valid for humankind, not something restricted to Israel. All interpretations that try to put the statements concerning the serpent or the woman in certain historical or ritual contexts therefore raise problems.

2. The Hebrew term used here has no erotic meaning. Such interpretations must therefore be dismissed.

motif. Hence, J could not but link the woman with the tree when making use of the motif of the tree and the serpent. Everybody is influenced by their own time and its imagination. Furthermore, an attachment to certain conventional forms was much more necessary in the old orient than today. J was probably bound by given pictures, which he could not change at will. The motif of Woman–Tree–Serpent is one single complex and therefore, from the outset, devoid of any value judgment.

I have already explained briefly what the actual sin of the first human beings consists of. The lack of specific terminology shows that it cannot be just one single sinful act. Not before Genesis 4 do we find a term for 'sin'. J seems to be concerned with a statement about sin as a basic occurrence which took place before all individual transgressions. He lives at a time when it is essential for the believing Israelite to obey God's commands.

Obedience means life, transgression means death. The sum of all wisdom is the fear of God, which the author exemplifies with the 'tree of knowing good and evil'. This is a special matter of concern for J (because the given tale in the history of tradition calls it the 'tree of life' in the middle of the garden). This statement about 'good and evil' in its totality is not just a moral issue. It has been interpreted as 'learning about life', 'losing naivety', 'entering history', 'understanding contexts', 'rising to a higher level of civilization', and so on. The term *yāda'*, which is used here, has a wide range of meanings. *yāda'* can mean 'to make oneself acquainted with something', 'get intimate', 'become experienced'—without fear. *yāda'* can be used for the deepest knowledge of God as well as the carnal knowledge of man and wife. J uses it in this sense in Gen. 4.1: 'Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain'. 'Knowing good and evil' thus comprises the sexual component but extends this meaning further. The complex occurrences of Genesis 3 must by no means be limited to a sexual interpretation.

What is the author's intention in Genesis 3? Are human beings supposed to remain ignorant and naive? Or is this a disapproval of wisdom, which could also be symbolized by the serpent (as is frequently written)? Or is this a condemnation of progress?

It seems to me that, *contra* such interpretations, J is concerned with another matter. According to him man receives from God

all he needs, but there are limits. These limits are clearly defined by the words of the serpent: 'You will be like God'. It does not say, 'You will be like Yahweh'. This is something an Israelite theologian could never be brought to say. Instead he says, 'You will be like Elohim'! To become divine or like Elohim, not to stay human, is the temptation. Elohim are the Canaanite gods, and the remark is dropped by the serpent which, among other things, is almost certainly a Canaanite symbol (see above). Elohim is a term for those gods which were known not only in Israel but also among its neighbouring peoples. The transgression in Genesis 3, therefore, means ignoring set limits and wishing to become like Elohim, instead of staying human. The author comes back to the same theme in the last narrative of Genesis 1–11, the narrative about the building of the tower. It is not a decline of knowledge or real wisdom which must be coupled with the fear of God. Nevertheless, J rejects certain kinds of arrogant knowledge, which attempt to challenge God.

By breaking the command (specific, single commands do not exist as yet: because the author refers to all humankind, he refers to a general willingness to obey God) man destroys the trust between himself and Yahweh. (In Genesis 2 Yahweh takes a walk in the garden, in Genesis 3 the appearance of God becomes danger.) Moreover, unity among humans is at stake, man's existence becomes disharmony and strife through his own fault.

This is how the biblical author deals with the difficult problem of evil: God created a good 'garden', but other factors intervene. He offers no explanation for evil; neither does the Bible as a whole. Evil exists on earth, but no scapegoat is made to be responsible. Neither the woman nor an extraterrestial power is held responsible for it in the J tales.

Finally, a word on the so-called curses. As mentioned in the remarks on the history of tradition, the curses are not included in the old source. *'ādām* is put in the garden; *'ādām* sins; *'ādām* is driven out of the garden. The loss of the garden is the actual punishment. J describes with these poetical verses the situation of his contemporaries. It is not as if it were God's intention. This holds true with respect to the relationship between God and man, the relationship between the sexes, the hard work in the

field for the man, and the pain of childbirth for the woman. Genesis 2 explains how it was intended according to God's plan of creation. The aetiological verses also demonstrate the perversion of the original plan, the situation that should not have been. If this holds true, every attempt at changing this misery must be a step in the right direction. Yet, unfortunately, once again a double standard is in operation. If we were concerned here with God-given punishments which must not be changed, these verses would forbid any relief for the man's work, for example the introduction of tractors or such like. However, these verses were only called upon when it was attempted to improve woman's lot, for example by a birth with reduced pain (cf. Keel 1975; 74-76). The exegesis of the sentence 'and he shall rule over you' was fateful. The phrasing 'he shall be your master' verbally paved the way for the impression that it is an unconditional, all-embracing command. It is, however, the description of a given miserable situation which J related in the past tense. Just as with the other descriptions of given conditions, this sentence explains what happened against God's will at the time when J lives. In other words, a woman steps in the direction intended by God, whenever and wherever she tries to shake off the unjust, oppressive rule of the man. Thus, the feminist movement could be interpreted as a movement towards the original plan of creation which J did not find in his own lifetime.[1]

The question arises: who can and will use this text as legitimation? Wherever male-dominated theology and ideology want to oppress 'the woman', they still fall back on such passages as suitable starting points. Such an interest in legitimation existed in the era of the Israelite and Judahite kings. Since the rule of Solomon, at the latest, a legitimation of the monarchy served the interest of wide sections of the population. The story of Joseph probably centres upon the question: may a brother rule over a brother? This is answered in the affirmative in certain circles and under certain conditions: if the brother acts like a real brother and not like a despot. A similar question, may the man

1. Genesis 2 and the love songs of the Song of Songs describe such an original relationship.

rule over the woman?, is answered by the author of Genesis 2–3 with a definite 'no!'. Such a rule results from sin, from transgression, and is an expression which signifies breaking away from God, and a perversion of the order that God wanted.

Much remains to be said, for example, concerning the names given to 'the woman' in Genesis 2 and 3. And what remains of the many negative arguments used by tradition? Much of it is still common currency. The J narratives do not deny their origin in a patriarchal society. J is necessarily a man of his time too. But whereas nobody dares to reintroduce slavery today by reference to isolated biblical verses, the contrary holds in regard to the question of man and woman. Isolated sentences from Genesis are still referred to as arguments for the subordination of women. And yet, J was concerned with the woman as a full human being, wherever he might have gathered his material. Contrary to later attempts to demonize 'the woman', and contrary to the most recent ones to make an original goddess of her, this has to be stressed. The woman is no goddess and the man is no little Lord God. In opposition to the popular belief of his time and all later disparagements, this biblical theologian depicts 'the woman' as an equal and equally human partner of 'the man'. Both woman and man are created directly by God; both man and woman are fallible. J wanted to show their *togetherness*; he does not look at what they are in her or his own right.

b. *Genesis 1*

The later text of the P source suggests some new trends. In the interest of clarity, the interpretative procedure will be inverted: evaluation of the source will precede an exegesis of the details.[1]

1. At first each single text has to be interpreted individually, and as precisely as possible at that. Then it has to be evaluated critically. Although this is common procedure, preconceptions sometimes remain unnoticed (a sentence taken from the Decalogue is of more importance than a dated purity law in a cultic, ritual context of the Old Testament). When assessing values, it may happen that a text from the Old Testament can claim more importance than an exegesis of that text in the New Testament, all the more so if the exegesis is distorted. Cf. Haag 1980: 2-16. Regarding these problems and the dialogue between biblical and systematic theology cf. also Oeming 1987.

Genesis 1 certainly commands a high degree of authority because of its position in the Bible, its succinctness, and the content of its statement regarding the theological core. Man's place in creation, the relationship between God and man, between human beings themselves and with the whole of creation, is given a theological explanation.

In the following I shall confine myself to the statements concerning humankind. Genesis 1 relates the creation of humankind after all other acts of creation, namely by rendering a decision made by God in v. 26.

> [26a]Then Elohim said,
> [b]Let us make man in our image and likeness
> [c]to rule the fish in the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle, all wild animals on earth, and all reptiles that crawl upon the earth (NEB).

In v. 26b the choice of words introduces two different expressions for 'image': firstly, *ṣelem*, meaning something like a picture, figure, statue of a king; and secondly *dᵉmût*, 'something similar to'. This careful phrasing—Hebrew tends to paraphrase complicated matters with different terms—may indicate that the author cannot finds the words for expressing what he means to say. The term *dᵉmût* is also used by Ezekiel, a contemporary who operates within the priestly tradition when he describes his visions: 'There was a semblance...I saw something looking like...' (Ezek. 1, 5, 16, 22, 26). Likewise, the P author wants to express that he lacks the suitable words. The statement is further delimited by the use of the plural: God joins up with his heavenly hosts in a manner of speaking ('Let us...'). The divine (Elohim) corresponds to humankind (*'ādām*) as a whole.

These three lines, the poetically phrased middle section of this account, embody the essence of the whole. The text quoted contains a controversial switch from the singular to the plural; twice the term *ṣelem* occurs, and there is a new differentiation between male and female, which is placed exactly in the middle of this succinct text. Thus it is part of the good creation executed by God himself, as is expressed three times(!) in this verse with the verb *bārā'*, 'create'. What is rendered vividly in Genesis 2—God himself says it is not good for the man to be alone—is

summed up here in a single sentence on the image and likeness of God. Humankind as a whole, in female and male manifestation, is God's image. The author of Genesis 1 would have probably failed to understand the division of human body and mind, or a statement limited to the soul only.

The third part of this complex, v. 28, renders God's blessing for man and woman, which is always phrased in the plural. The statements of this text, which is extraordinarily charged with theological significance, have to be regarded, first and foremost, against their own background. P gives an account of humankind's station and task against the background of ancient oriental concepts of the world and humankind. (There, humanity is created as a mass to make work easier for the gods. In Genesis, however, humanity possesses an intrinsic value.) The text itself explains what is meant by the image of God: the final clause of v. 26 mentions ruling, and this is repeated at the end of v. 28. P relies on the ancient oriental ideology of the monarchy found quite frequently in Egypt where the king or queen represented the deity. Recent research confirms this.[1] In Israel's environment only single outstanding persons qualify for that, whereas P regards all human beings as God's representatives. Humankind's rule over creation—like a good shepherd who leads and protects his people—means acceptance of *responsibility*. As God's representative, humankind is responsible for the creatures, just as God is for the whole of creation. The democratization of an ancient oriental concept is particularly impressive in this case. Just as in Genesis 2, where man is to till and keep the garden, he is given a task here. Thus, work and task are based on God's good creation for both, man and woman. God is present in that which is made in his image, so he is present in humankind's acceptance of responsibility for the created world. It is important that humans are only allowed to rule over the rest of creation. Accordingly, animals may not be killed and humans are not to rule over other humans: it is God's privilege to rule over humanity. The author of Genesis 1 thus shifted the concepts of his environment on purpose. First, human rule over other humans is excluded; secondly, humans

1. Cf. Ockinga 1984; Zenger 1983; Gross 1981: 244-64.

are qualified clearly as male and female. So this statement *explicitly* excludes men's rule over women! Oddly enough, this has not been noticed before. An analysis of the wording in Gen. 1.26-28 results in precisely this, however: man and woman rule over the rest of creation, and this implies only too clearly that one gender may not claim power over the other. Thus P says the same as the vivid narrative tale of Genesis 2–3, albeit in quite a rational and theologically differentiated language. Genesis 2–3 must have been known to the writer of P, and his response may be interpreted as follows. Whenever the man rules over the woman and she suffers from such rule, this is against the aim of creation, a perversion of the original plan. If there was any room for doubt regarding this plan in Genesis 2–3, P purposefully corrected it, made it more precise. Thus this source confirms my exegesis of Genesis 2–3, which is shared by most exegetes today. J regards the man's rule over the woman as a consequence of sin, whereas the Priestly source mentions no explicit sin-tale. Instead he presents, in poetical/rhythmic form, a Creation/Image-of-God statement.

P does not reappear until Genesis 5, where a statement about human God-likeness and its continuation is repeated. This is mentioned for the third time after the Flood. Now humanity is allowed to kill animals, but not to shed the blood of another person. 'He that sheds the blood of a man, for that man his blood shall be shed; for in the image (*ṣelem*) of Elohim has God made man (*'ādām*)!' (Gen. 9.6, NEB). Whoever attacks the image (three times *'ādām*) also attacks the prototype, God. Undoubtedly *'ādām* once again refers to both man and woman, or else the killing of women would be permitted. This underlines the interpretation of Gen. 1.26-28, which forbids human beings to rule over other human beings or to exploit them. Violence in its worst form is explicitly forbidden with reference to humankind, created as *ṣelem*. There are no further references to the image of God in P apart from these three.

Genesis 1 installs both man and woman as rulers. The last line of the middle section ('Male and female he created them') is significant, and not only because of the subsequent blessing of fertility. Naturally the woman is indispensible here, but the order to rule is repeated in v. 28, actually in the plural form. So

man and woman share the task of responsibility for ruling the world, and of filling the yet empty earth. Viewed from yet another perspective, this also implies that man and woman function as God's representatives of his image only when they share this responsibility. This is the governing principle. Still, this does not imply that humans are to fulfil their task as couples only. Whenever one gender rules the world *alone*, the originally intended order is perverted. The order to rule, to *master* the world, has in fact mainly been effective for males. It is about time that the female share is reclaimed! Since the statement on the God-likeness of the woman excludes the notion that the man may assume power over her—and vice versa, but that is not the problem in this day and age—the anthropological and theological consequences of such a succinct statement on the very first page of the Bible must be reconsidered.[1]

1. This is exactly where the anthropological and theological statements intertwine. In addition to the anthropological consequences, the theological ones could only be hinted at: if humankind is godlike in its male and female manifestation only, this anthropological statement must have an influence on the image of God. Woman and man reflect something divine; so their prototype must be divine. If man and woman represent something divine and fulfil their cultural task together, we have to seek for the female part in the image of God today. On the basis of Gen. 1.26-28 the God of the Old Testament cannot be regarded as purely male. As all God talk is subject to the second commandment, inasmuch as verbal images could be created, a 'purely male' concept of God would be like a 'carved image' or a 'likeness', an idol, just like a 'goddess' would be an idol. From the theological point of view it is clear that all images are only temporary: all God talk is analogous, that is, the unlikeness of the applied term is always greater than its likeness. And yet the imbalance in favour of a male manner of speaking in referring to God is quite remarkable. At this very moment it is a matter of great concern to create an awareness of this and correct it from the feminist point of view.

Cf. the following with respect to this problem: Laut 1983; Raurell 1989; Ruether 1983; Schüngel-Straumann 1987; Schüssler Fiorenza 1984; Strahm 1987; Wacker 1987.

RETHINKING THE INTERPRETATION OF GENESIS 2.4B–3.24

Lyn M. Bechtel

Probably the biblical passage that has been most voluminously interpreted is Gen. 2.4b–3.24.[1] Most, and in particular Christian, interpretations of the story are variations on the 'sin and fall' of humanity theme, where the human and woman are created immortal and placed in a paradise. Because they are disobedient and commit the first sin (they overstep the bounds of creatureliness), they fall and are expelled from 'paradise', punished with pain and mortality, and life goes from being completely good in paradise to completely evil in a fallen world radically changed by their sin.[2] This interpretation denies the goodness of the structure of the universe (the oppositional forces) and 'life' as presently constituted. All of this has had a strong negative influence on Western culture's view of life.

Although the myth is unquestionably patriarchal in its orientation, many versions of the traditional interpretation have escalated that patriarchal orientation, making the myth a misogynist's playground. They have suggested that women are secondary, inferior, and should be subordinated to men as their punishment from God for being seductive and responsible for bringing sin, evil and death into the world. Consequently, it has been used through the centuries as a prooftext for male

1. I would like to thank Rev. Marlin Schaffstall, pastor of the Mountainview Moravian Church, Hellertown, PA, for his many contributions to this article, gleaned from numerous sermons on a multitude of subjects.

2. For a general history of the exegesis of the myth, see Westermann 1984, or Wallace 1985. Although his is a recent survey of exegesis, Wallace seems unaware of feminist contributions.

supremacy and the inferiority and moral weakness of women.[1] When all the logical arguments against women's liberation have failed, the chauvinist falls back on this interpretation of the story to show that the subjugation of women is 'ordained' by God from the beginning. As Phyllis Trible points out, 'Over the centuries this misogynous reading has acquired a status of canonicity so that those who deplore and those who applaud the story agree upon its meaning' (Trible 1978: 73). And as von Rad notes, 'There is perhaps no other biblical text which is so inflexible with regard to this confused mass of stalled questions and whose witness proceeds from a road as narrow as a razor's edge' (von Rad 1961: 75). The pervasiveness of this interpretation of the myth in modern culture, which does not value myths, is incredible.

a. *Problems Associated with the Traditional Interpretation*

There are enough problems associated with the traditional 'sin and fall' interpretation to suggest that it may not respect the integrity of the text and may not be the most convincing, and certainly not the only or most authoritative, interpretation. Some of the problems need to be reviewed. Probably the most compelling reason to question the 'sin and fall' interpretation is the fact that Adam and Eve and the Gen. 2.4b–3.24 myth in general are not used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible as an example of sin, fall and punishment despite plentiful opportunities, particularly in the prophets. It is only from the second century BCE onward (beginning with the Wisdom of Ben Sira) that the 'sin and fall' interpretation begins to emerge.

There are many illogical aspects to the 'sin and fall' interpretation. For example, if the man and the woman are created immortal, why are they created sexual? Their sexual potential is evident well before the 'fall', and indeed in *1 Enoch* sexuality is necessary because humanity is created mortal. Or, the human is

1. For an example of modern misogynous reading, see McKenzie 1954: 541-72. For a review of misogynous readings, see Stone 1976: 5-8, 198-233. For Christian use of the myth, see Prusak 1974: 89-116; and Pagels 1988.

supposedly created immortal, yet the human is created from finite material, the ground of the earth.[1] Or, if the garden represents a 'paradise', it should, by definition, be devoid of binary opposition and have only life, goodness, permanence and prosperity. Why has God placed a tree for discernment of good and bad and a snake of evil and death in this paradise? Or if the woman is responsible for bringing evil and death into the world, why is she given the honorable and positive name *'ḥawwâ*/ Eve/Life, mother of all living'? Why does the human not question the eating of the fruit? The woman at least questions and thinks about the action. Why in 3.14-15 is enmity between snakes and women emphasized through parallelism? Is it really critical to fallen human existence? Many people have no such aversion to snakes. Why, after eating the fruit, do the human and woman not fear sin and death but, instead, fear their nakedness? And why is it considered punishment for the human being to be sent out into the world to cultivate the ground from which the human is taken when it has been stated (in 2.5) that humans are intended to cultivate the ground of the earth?

The Tree of Life and the section on the River of Eden (2.10-14) seem to be extraneous, having no meaning for the 'sin and fall' interpretation. This forces scholars to posit that these elements are secondary and do not really belong in the story.[2] The myth is too carefully constructed to suggest that it contains sections or elements that are there by mistake.

The traditional 'sin and fall' interpretation talks of a response of guilt for sin, and punishment for that guilt. Yet, there is no 'guilt' or 'sin' vocabulary used.[3] Instead, the story talks about a

1. Westermann stresses that *'āpār* is perishable material (1974: 205-207).

2. The issue of whether the story is a unity or not is still debated. Many scholars deny the narrative's homogeneous character, proposing that the story is composed of a separate creation myth and a paradise myth (e.g. Gunkel 1910; von Rad 1961). Most scholars agree that there are non-Israelite background and oral prehistory for the individual motifs.

3. Observed by Naidoff (1978: 2-14) from Fromm (1966: 23) and Hanson (1972: 45-46). In contrast to Gen. 2.4b–3.24, sin is the issue in God's judgment on Cain (4.7), and 'sin' vocabulary is used to indicate that emphasis.

response of 'shame'. In my study of shame in ancient Israel (Bechtel 1991: 47-76) I find that shame and guilt are radically different emotional experiences (a conclusion supported by modern psychology), and that shame is the central means of social control used by society. Scholars have assumed that shame and guilt are synonymous, and have interpreted them both in terms of guilt—because guilt is a modern means of social control for Western society and is, therefore, more familiar. Use of guilt as the central means of social control characterizes a later period, from the third century BCE onward. In light of the important functioning of shame in monarchical society, the implications of the response of shame in the myth should be investigated.

The traditional 'sin and fall' interpretation presents a very negative view of life, death and the perception of women as the bringers of sin and death, a view not found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. It is, on the other hand, characteristic of thinking from the third century BCE onwards, under the influence of Hellenism.

The story is clearly fraught with mythical elements and symbolism, yet it is generally interpreted as if it were a historical narrative. The symbolic mode of communication of the myth has not been adequately considered.[1] A myth is a collective or group product that tells a universal truth in a highly symbolic way. So myth communicates truth through symbols and a symbolic mode of communication. It is truth that has been experienced collectively and developed into a myth over many generations through collective effort. So it is not surprising that myth and the symbolic mode of communication are characteristic of predominantly group-oriented societies, in contrast to the historical mode of communication, which is characteristic of predominantly individual-oriented societies.

One important aspect of the symbolic mode of communication is that language functions on a very different level than is

1. This is the result of modern cultural bias which misunderstands the symbolic mode of communication and usually considers a myth to be a story that is untrue, mainly because it is not historical. There is an assumption that only historical narrative adequately represents 'reality'. In fact, both historical narrative and myth communicate truth, but in different ways.

common in historical narrative. So, any emphasis on language or linguistic play in a myth should be taken very seriously. Another important aspect of the symbolic mode is the concept of time. Myth universalizes time by lifting the truth it depicts out of specific history, out of specific time, so that it can apply to any point in history/time. It does so by portraying time as cyclical rather than linear. A final aspect of the symbolic mode is the fact that themes are presented primarily synchronically and symbolically, and only secondarily chronologically as in historical narrative.[1]

The Genesis story should be classified and analyzed as myth, with methods that discern the symbolism, the language and the synchronic mythical structure. Lévi-Strauss and Edmund Leach have tried unsuccessfully to analyze the story according to mythical conventions, using the 'sin and fall' paradigm. Their lack of success should not suggest a problem with the myth, but a problem with the interpretation of the myth.

Even though myths communicate through symbols, in the traditional 'sin and fall' interpretation the full impact of the symbolism of the trees, water and garden has, for the most part, been ignored because it does not illuminate the interpretation. Furthermore, the completely negative symbolism of the snake in the traditional interpretations is incompatible with snake symbolism in the ancient Near East and in Israel during the monarchy. Most scholars agree that this negative snake symbolism was introduced in the second or third century BCE and is consistent with the world-view of that later period. But since negative symbolism is deemed so central to the traditional 'sin and fall' interpretation, an accurate meaning is often not pursued.

An emphasis on language through wordplays is typical of symbolic communication. Wordplays function as flashing signposts indicating the emphasis of the narrative and relatedness between separate items. Yet in the traditional interpretation most often the wordplays do not function.

All of these problems should indicate that there is a lack of

1. As shown by Lévi-Strauss 1955: 81-106; and Leach 1961: 386-96 and 1971: 7-43.

integrity between the traditional interpretation and the text. It is my contention that the 'sin and fall' interpretation develops very slowly during the last centuries of the first millennium BCE.[1] The change in interpretation occurs because of and in response to the changes in social, political and economic conditions of those centuries.

Despite the fact that most scholars have recognized the numerous problems associated with this interpretation, a significant number still cling tenaciously to it. Most feminists have recognized the misogynistic misreadings in the traditional 'sin and fall' interpretation, but some still hold to the 'sin and fall' interpretation with its subordination of women.[2] Others, rather than question the interpretation, have suggested that the challenge is to transcend the sexism of the traditional interpretation.[3] Phyllis Trible and Mieke Bal have attempted to expose and remove the misogynistic misreadings from the traditional 'sin and fall' interpretation.[4] It is only recently that there has been questioning of, and a slow movement away from, the 'sin and fall' interpretation. Carol Meyers has de-emphasized disobedience, sin and fall and emphasized other existing themes of the text.[5] Ellen van Wolde, through an excellent and comprehensive semiotic analysis, has shown the complete absence of the 'sin and fall' theme and, instead, her semiotic

1. Meyers (1988: 3, 73) has also posited the possibility of a difference in the meaning of the text between ancient Israel and post-Israelite biblical religion; and she suggests that it is only in early Judaism and Christianity that Adam and Eve emerge in the mainstream of religious literature.

2. E.g. Lanser (1988: 67-84), who feels that the arguments of Trible and Bal break down when 'they press a formal theory of language beyond its own possibilities' (pp. 75-76). Or Detweiler (1988: 135-39), who extends the thrust of Lanser's argument. For a review of the state of feminist scholarship on the myth, see Milne 1988: 12-21, 39.

3. E.g. Milne 1988; L'Heureaux 1983: 76-79.

4. Trible 1978: 80-140. Trible's textual approach is the basis for Mieke Bal's study (1985c) of the role of women in Gen. 2–3. Gardner (1990: 1-18) also follows Trible's approach. Higgins (1976: 639-47) has revealed the misconceptions of Eve as temptress.

5. Meyers 1988: 72-138. Meyers's study forms the backdrop for this interpretation.

analysis reveals the theme of maturation of humanity (van Wolde 1989).[1]

In light of the growing uneasiness with the traditional 'sin and fall' interpretation, it should be rethought and the possibility of 'another' interpretation entertained: an interpretation that would acknowledge the integrity of the text, incorporate all the existing symbols and synchronic themes, give meaning to the elements of the myth that have no meaning in the 'sin and fall' interpretation, and undergird the cultural assumptions and concerns of monarchical society. But to find such an interpretation, it is mandatory for the exegete to liberate her/himself from the assumptions and concerns of the traditional interpretation—the assumption of temptation, disobedience, sin, fall, guilt and curse—and from misogynous perspectives.

One key to finding 'another' interpretation is laying out the symbols and the synchronic themes of the myth since, according to Lévi-Strauss, myths communicate through symbols and an interplay of binary forces which are found in the synchronic structure. In this article I will expose and interpret the mythic structure, analyzing symbolically and synchronically (rather than diachronically), in order to develop the direction of the interpretation.[2] My purpose is to lay the foundation for 'another' interpretation and an eventual diachronic narrative analysis. Without the symbolic/synchronic analysis as a base, a diachronic narrative analysis is less than convincing.[3]

1. I have been working on this analysis of the text for ten years and have recently discovered van Wolde's semiotic analysis. We have independently reached the same conclusions about the focus on maturation and the relation between the humans and the earth. For a previous semantic study, see Jobling 1980: 41-49.

2. For different synchronic approaches, see Walsh 1977: 161-77 and Jobling 1986b: 17-43. Also see Patte and Parker 1980: 141-59.

3. I will not do a thorough analysis of the semantic relationships in the myth because van Wolde has already done an excellent and comprehensive analysis that takes the myth in the same direction as I do, but from a very different approach.

b. *Symbolic Image: Maturation/Differentiation*

One of the most important symbols in the myth is a symbolic image in 2.25: the *'ādām* (human) and the *'iššâ* (woman) are 'naked' (*'ᵃrûmmîm*) and not ashamed. When in the course of human life would this be true? The conclusion is: in early childhood. Small children are not the least bit ashamed of being seen naked because they have not matured enough to be self-aware, aware of their sexual difference, or conscious of the social implications of public nakedness. They have not begun one particular stage of differentiation or individuation. Later in the story (3.7), as a consequence of interacting with the snake and eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowing, 'their eyes are opened', they 'know' that they are naked (*'êrummīm*). In other words, they have become self-aware, aware of their sexual difference, and conscious of the social implications of public nakedness. They have begun to differentiate communally; they are aware of public nakedness and a reaction of shame in the context of community, albeit their parent Adonay Elohim. This is symbolic of a critical stage of maturation. Their response in 3.10 is *not* 'fear of death', which is the consequence that Adonay Elohim gave for eating of the Tree of Knowing, but 'fear of being naked' (*'êrōm*), because in Israelite society the consequence of being publicly naked, for adults, is shame. They have had their first experience of shame as maturing people, so they cover themselves. In a society in which the major means of social control is shame,[1] this first experience of shame is critical to the socialization process that accompanies maturation, and would be viewed positively. And in such a society the 'fear' of shame is as important, or more important, as a means of social control, than an actual act of shaming.[2] Maturation entails increasing differentiation. So, this section provides the first important clue: the male human and the woman will go through increasing

1. See the conclusions drawn by Bechtel 1991.

2. Many scholars have misunderstood 'shame', assuming that it is a reaction of guilt for sin. E.g. von Rad 1961; Brueggemann 1982; Sasson 1985: 418-21.

differentiation, in order to progress from immature childhood to mature adulthood.[1]

This stage of maturation can be roughly compared to the stage of adolescent individuation and questioning, which is essential to the process of differentiation of the self from parents. This kind of differentiation is not 'rebellion' or 'sin' but natural and critical growth, in which the adolescent begins the quest for mature selfhood, freedom and independence.[2] It is not a process of alienation from parents but a maturing of the relationship with the parents. Likewise, in the myth it is not a question of alienation between Adonay Elohim and the humans, but a maturing of their relationship. The implications of that maturing relationship will become evident when the implications of knowing good and bad have been explicated. This stage is a crisis or crossroads in that it is a point of both danger and opportunity, a point of decision and change, a point of personal growth. It is not a 'fall', but movement toward the emergence of human consciousness, freedom, maturity, socialization, and the realization of identity in relation to the group.

One issue that needs to be dealt with before proceeding is the use of the word *'ādām* I have translated it as generic 'human',[3] to distinguish it from the sexual differentiation implied in *'îš* (man). The word *'ādām* is masculine, requiring masculine pronouns, but when the character in the myth is called *'ādām*, sexual differentiation or functioning is not indicated. In ch. 2 *'ādām* represents a small child who is unaware of sexual differentiation. In ch. 3 *'ādām* is aware of sexual differentiation, but sexual differentiation or functioning is not essential. When the text wants to emphasize sexual differentiation or functioning, it uses the word *'îš* (2.24; 3.6; 3.16).

1. Concluded by Driver 1904; Gunkel 1910; and Cassuto 1961.

2. For a psychological analysis of the maturation process, see Fromm 1941; Erikson 1963 and 1968.

3. Trible (1978) translates *'ādām* 'earth creature', positing that despite its exclusively male reference the creature is androgynous, with its gender coming only with the creation of the woman (p. 53). Korsak translates it as 'groundling'; which retains the wordplay with 'ground' (Korsak, pp. 39-52 in this volume).

Are there other indications of the process of differentiation/maturation? The first level of awareness of differentiation of self from 'the other' comes with the creation of the animals. Up to the point of creating the animals there is no evidence of the *'ādām* doing or saying anything. The *'ādām* is an infant or a very small child. When the animals are created, the *'ādām* differentiate himself from them by sorting them into categories and naming them. The *'ādām* is learning to differentiate with language. It is interesting to note that when the animals are created, there is no mention of their sexual differentiation. Since the *'ādām* is still a child, and has not realized sexual differentiation (portrayed by the use of the generic, sexually indifferent term, *'ādām*), the *'ādām* certainly would not be able to recognize sexual differentiation in the animals either.

The second level of differentiation/maturation is that of sexual differentiation which begins with the forming of the *'iššâ*. Now the *'ādām* actually speaks, declaring in 2.23, 'This at last is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh [unity or similarity]. She shall be called *'iššâ (woman)* for from *'îš* (man) she is taken [differentiation or separation]'.

The first stage of differentiation is differentiation of self from other; the second stage is sexual differentiation; and the third stage is communal differentiation.

Another key piece of evidence regarding the process of maturation comes in the dialog in 3.12-13. Neither the *'ādām* nor the *'iššâ* are able to assume responsibility for their actions. Each places the blame on someone else or on Adonay Elohim. Since assuming responsibility for one's actions represents maturity in its most accomplished state, its absence here signals immaturity. By this point in the story the pair have begun to mature, but maturation is a slow process which begins in the garden and continues throughout adult life in the 'world'.

c. *Symbols: Trees*

But, can this theme of maturation be supported by the major symbols of the myth? In the archaeological and textual evidence stemming from the ancient Near East during the Middle Bronze Age, one level of symbolism of the tree is that of growth,

maturation and the continuation of life from generation to generation through sexual reproduction. It acquires this symbolism because of its slow imperceptible growth (similar to the slow process of human growth); because of its phallus shaped trunk, making it a symbol of male sexuality; because of the production of seeds or fruit, making it a symbol of male and female sexuality (children are often referred to as 'seed'); and because of the shedding of leaves season after season, making it appear to die and begin life anew, over and over in a cyclical fashion.[1] In symbolizing both male and female sexuality, it is the ability to produce 'life' generation after generation that is essential. Procreative capacity is something that develops and is realized during the process of maturation. For a predominantly group-oriented society, sexuality and the cyclical continuation of life through the generations of the group is the way they cope with death. Life and death are part of the same cyclical process of life.

1. *Tree of Life*

In the myth two of the trees have additional symbolism. As a symbol in the ancient Near East, the meaning of the Tree of Life is straightforward.[2] It represents a sense of pure life, life without *awareness* of binary opposition or death, recurring youth without a sense of progressing toward death.[3] At the beginning of the story there are no prohibitions concerning the Tree of Life,

1. The power of the goddess Asherah is symbolized by a tree (1 Kgs 16.33; 2 Kgs 13.6; 21.2-7; Jer. 17.2, 7-8; Deut. 16.21) and her power is that of fertility which is the gift of life. See Day 1986: 385-408.

2. Some scholars feel that there is a point in the development of the myth when there is only one tree, the Tree of Knowledge, because it is essential for the development of the myth; and the Tree of Life is secondary. The duality is then attributed to the combination of traditions (e.g. von Rad 1961; Speiser 1964; Westermann 1984). I disagree with this proposal because I find that both trees are essential for the development of the myth, and stand in opposition to one another.

3. See the Myth of Gilgamesh, where the tree of life signifies recurring youth. The Gilgamesh Myth shares many of the same themes of maturation with Gen. 2–3 (see Jacobsen 1976), but the full exploration and comparison of these themes is beyond the scope of this work. Cf. Bailey 1970: 137-50 for some articulation of the maturation theme, though Bailey adheres to the traditional interpretation for Gen. 2–3.

because it represents childhood and a child's view of life. When the humans are still children, eating of this tree would simply verify their existing state and view of life. After they have eaten of the Tree of Knowledge, begun to mature, and are being sent forth from the garden into the world, the Tree of Life is prohibited. An immature view of life is fine and even essential for children, but inadequate for adults. The Tree of Life could be called 'the Tree of Immature Knowledge of Life', which means a lack of awareness of binary oppositions and death.

2. *Tree of Knowing Good and Bad*

The meaning of the Tree of Knowing Good and Bad centers on the root *yd'*, general knowing or broad intellectual, moral, experiential and sexual discernment.[1] But knowing what? Knowing 'good and bad' is the capacity to discern the binary oppositions of life. In the Hebrew Bible, as Ackerman points out, knowing good and bad is human wisdom with all its shortcomings, definitely not knowledge that reaches beyond the limits of human possibility (see Ackermann 1990: 41-60). It is particularly important as a royal capacity, which is seen in the Court History in 2 Sam. 14.17; 19.35; 1 Kgs 3.7-9 (cf. Deut. 1.39; Isa. 7.15-16). This tree could be called 'the Tree of Discernment of Oppositional Forces'. Eating the 'fruit' of this tree symbolically begins the process of maturation, which includes sexual maturation (with the procreative potential to produce life) and the awareness of good and bad or oppositional forces. Since this knowledge comes only with maturation, the tree could also be called 'the Tree of Mature Knowledge of Life', and it is only prohibited for children.

Two important aspects of adult knowledge which are subtly embedded in the text are the awareness of the ambiguous nature of life, and the awareness of death. One example of ambiguity comes in reference to the trees in the garden:

1. I have combined the three general scholarly interpretations of the tree (ethical or moral discernment, sexual awareness and experience, and universal knowledge). For examples of these interpretations, see Buchanan 1956: 114-20; Clark 1969: 266-78; Clines 1974: 8-14; Wallace 1985: 123ff.

Adonay Elohim causes to grow from the ground all the trees that are a delight to see and good to eat, and a Tree of Life in the midst[1] of the garden, and a Tree of Knowing Good and Bad (2.9). The Tree of Life is in the midst of the garden, but is the Tree of Knowing Good and Bad there also? The text is ambiguous (Brueggemann 1982: 48). Later Adonay Elohim says, 'From the Tree of Knowing Good and Bad do not eat from it' (2.16). In 3.3 the woman says, 'From the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden Elohim said, "Do not eat from it"'. To which tree does she refer? For the ambiguities of life there are no answers.

Both awareness of ambiguity and awareness of death are combined in the statements of Adonay Elohim and the snake in 2.16-17 and 3.4-5. The chiastic construction of the two statements brackets them (adding emphasis), and the use of the infinitive absolute construction conveys ambiguity of meaning. Adonay Elohim says, 'From all the trees certainly you may eat, but from the Tree of Knowing Good and Bad do not eat from it for when you eat from it certainly you will die' (2.16-17). Does it mean that the *'ādām* will immediately die or just become aware of the certainty of death? The audience's assumption is expected to be immediate death, yet the humans do not die at once. And immediate death does not appear to be the assumption of the *'ādām* and *'iššâ* who, after eating of the tree, fear their nakedness and not death. They are still not mature enough to be fully aware of death, let alone fear it (3.7-10). The snake says, 'Certainly you will not die, because Elohim knows that when you eat from it, your eyes will be opened and you will become like Elohim, knowing good and bad' (3.4-5). The snake is correcting the assumption of immediate death and is not dealing with the issue of eventual death, which they have not matured enough to understand. Instead, he deals with what they can understand: the fact that once maturation begins with the eating of the fruit, there is the acquisition of new knowledge like that of the parent Adonay Elohim, knowledge of oppositional forces

1. Soggin (1975: 171-72) attempts to remove the ambiguity revolving around the issue of the 'midst' of the garden by giving *bᵉtôk* a less specific connotation.

which, incidentally, includes the awareness of death. The humans are experiencing the ambiguity of life and developing a growing awareness of death. The only thing that has changed is human knowledge and awareness.

d. *Symbols: Snake*

In the traditional interpretation the snake is often symbolic of evil,[1] temptation, seduction/sexual sin, death, and the causal links among those.[2] It has already been noted that the snake is not identified with exclusively negative symbolism until approximately the third century BCE, so snake symbolism during the monarchical period needs to be reviewed. One of the problems in deciphering this symbolism is that the way a culture experiences snakes on a daily basis largely determines the interpretation. In modern culture, which is more technological and less agricultural, snakes are universally disliked. There is an assumption that all people have a dislike for snakes. But this is not necessarily true. Many people are fascinated by them.[3] So, in interpreting the symbolism of the snake, care should be taken not to allow cultural prejudices against snakes to color the interpretation.

According to K. Joines's extensive study of snake symbolism in Mesopotamia, Egypt and Israel,[4] the snake is a synthesis of recurring youthfulness (because of the ability to shed its skin periodically and so appears to cyclically begin life anew), wisdom and chaos/death. In addition, many scholars have acknowledged that in the ancient Near East the snake is a universal symbol of male sexuality because of its phallic shape. On a practical level, the snake is a wild or uncontrolled animal that is beneficial in cultivated or controlled areas, ridding farms of rodents that consume crops and stored grain. So, snakes are

1. Exegetes have, for the most part, abandoned the understanding of the snake as Satan.

2. See, e.g., von Rad 1961; Brueggemann 1982. For a more recent proposal, see Holter 1990: 106-12.

3. The Greeks kept non-poisonous house snakes as pets to protect their stored grain.

4. Joines 1968: 245-56; 1974; 1975: 1-11. Cf. Mundkur 1983.

life-protecting. Yet they contain a degree of ambivalence, being a wild/uncontrolled animal that protects in the cultivated controlled areas. In addition, the snake can often be observed sunning on a rock, giving it a terrestrial or 'known world' orientation. Seconds later it slithers into a hole, giving it a subterranean or 'unknown world' orientation and a further ambivalent quality. And the ambivalent snake is mysterious and fascinating because it is extremely agile, yet it has no visible motor organs. It is a mystery that eludes full perception. Consequently, it characterizes wisdom and is a symbol of the human potential of discernment, particularly the ambivalent or binary qualities of life. And within the wisdom tradition in general, wisdom is life (see Prov. 3.16, where Wisdom is personified as a woman with riches and honor in her left hand and long life in the right hand).

All of these concepts color the symbolic meaning of the snake. But in the Genesis myth the snake is also described as *'ārûm* (shrewdly or cleverly wise). This warrants further amplification. *'ārûm* is often translated as referring to 'cunning' wisdom, which indicates 'underhandedness'. But this has a negative connotation which is inappropriate. The wisdom referred to here is simply being 'street wise' about life, it is the shrewdness or cleverness of one's wisdom which allows an inferior person to attain superiority over a superior person. This kind of 'street' wisdom is an ideal within tribal societies (for example, see the wife/sister stories in Gen. 12.10-20; 20.1-18; 26.7-11). In the myth the Snake of Discernment is associated with the Tree of Discernment.

Over against the potential of the clever wisdom (*'ārûm*) of the snake stands the fact that it is shamed (*'ārûr*)[1] because it crawls on its belly and eats the dust (*'āpār*; cf. Isa. 49.23; Mic. 7.17)[2] of

1. Were it not for the importance of the wordplay, the word *bôš* would normally be used here, as it is in 2.25.

2. *'āpār* carries simultaneously the connotation of 'dust' and 'clay' in the myth. In 2.4b-5 the ground is dry. Then water rises up and waters the face of the ground, turning the 'dust' into 'clay', so that Adonay Elohim can form the *'ādām* from the *'ᵃdāmâ*. In 3.19 Adonay Elohim says to the *'ādām*, 'You are *'āpār* ("clay/dust") and to the *'āpār* ("dust/clay") you will return'. Once the body has remained in the ground for a long period of time, the bones turn to 'dust' (something, I would assume, ancient

the ground. I have purposely chosen to translate *'ārûr* as 'shamed' in regard to the snake. Normally, *'ārûr* is translated 'cursed', and I will translate it that way in reference to the 'ground'. But the snake's bodily position is part of a common shaming technique used in warfare.[1] In Israelite society both shaming techniques and cursing are means of social control and limitation, so with either a translation of 'shame' or 'curse' the underlying concept is that of 'limitation'. In addition, shaming lowers social status, whereas cursing does not have the same degree of status manipulation. Because of the low, inferior bodily position of the snake, 'shamed' seems to be a preferred translation for *'ārûr* here. The ambivalent snake is simultaneously superior, because of its potential of clever wisdom; and inferior, because of the limitation of the shameful position of crawling on its belly. These oppositional forces of its nature are only perceived after maturation has begun, after the human and the woman have eaten of the fruit of knowing good and bad.

And of course, some snakes are poisonous and life-threatening. Because of their life-threatening potential they are also linked with chaos, evil and death. But, interestingly, if you 'know' what kind of snake it is, you will then know if it is beneficial or life-threatening. Knowledge is critical to the experience of the snake!

Most importantly, in the myth the snake functions as a *symbol*, a symbol of adult male and female sexuality, of the continuation of life through generations, and of mature knowledge of the oppositional forces of life: the life-producing and life-threatening aspects of life, the known and unknown aspects of life, the controlled and uncontrolled aspects of life, superiority and inferiority, potential (wisdom) and limitation. It is a symbol of 'life'. The fact that the snake is a wild, 'natural' animal means that maturation, which it encourages, happens 'naturally', not because of a sin or fall.

people were aware of). Here the translation 'clay' misses the image.

1. The superior victors shame the defeated warriors by forcing them to crawl on their bellies, with their faces in the dust, in an attitude of inferiority and defenselessness—thus psychologically eliminating their initiative for reprisal (see Bechtel 1991).

e. *Symbols: Garden*

The garden is a symbolic place. It is a separate place planted by the parent Adonay Elohim after the creation of *'ādām*.[1] It is 'in Eden toward the east', which has led some scholars to try to define an actual geographic location in Mesopotamia (e.g. von Rad 1961: 78). But it must be remembered that language in a myth functions on a highly symbolic level. As many scholars have observed, the Hebrew word *'ēden*[2] means either 'pleasant/delight' or 'steppe/plain', suggesting a general pleasant environment more than an actual geographic location. To support this, the trees of the garden are described as a delight (*neḥmād*) to see and good to eat (2.9). It is an aesthetically pleasant place, cultivated and controlled by the parent Adonay Elohim. It is 'in the east', symbolic of the beginning of the day or the beginning of life (infancy and childhood). There is no description of oppositional forces in the garden, as there is in the rest of creation (heaven and earth; wild vegetation [*śîaḥ*] and cultivated vegetation/grains [*'ēśeb*];[3] rain from above and subterranean water [*'ēd*][4] from below), except for a tree that will produce awareness of oppositional forces (the Tree of Mature Knowledge). The presence of this tree indicates that the human will eventually need this awareness of oppositional forces that characterize the outside world. In the garden there are only

1. This is not the Garden of God, but a garden for humanity (Westermann 1978: 208). For a review of the motif of the Garden of God, in relation to the Genesis garden, see Wallace 1985: 70.

2. Akkadian *edinu*, based on the Sumerian *eden*.

3. Von Rad and Westermann make this distinction. Coote and Ord (1989) differentiate the wild and cultivated vegetation as annuals, versus the fruit-bearing trees of the garden which are perennials. Wallace contrasts the original wild vegetations (*śîaḥ* and *'ēśeb*) with the cultivated garden of paradise.

4. There is little consensus on the meaning of the word *'ēd*, which only occurs here and in Job 36.27. See Albright 1938: 91-103, who derives it from Akkadian *id* ('river', 'streams of sweet water beneath the earth'). Cf. Speiser 1955: 9-11, who studies the occurrences of *edu*, a Sumerian loanword in Akkadian, and derives a meaning of 'underground swell' or 'subterranean water'.

trees, trees that will provide the sole source of 'nourishment' for the man and woman, trees that are symbolic of growth and maturation. And there is a Tree of Lack of Awareness of Oppositional Forces (the Tree of Life), the tree of childhood and childhood awareness of life. The garden is the place where at first the *'ādām* lives alone, unaware of differentiation as an individual, unaware of sexual differentiation, and unaware of the oppositional forces that characterize the outside world. The *'ādām* lives securely, protected, cared for and confined. The garden is symbolic of the pleasant, childhood world created by the parent, Adonay Elohim, but for children only. There is clear differentiation between inside the garden and outside in 'the world' (*'ereṣ*). Yet the garden is filled with symbols of maturation. Maturation entails increasing differentiation, and part of the process of differentiation is separation from the childhood world of the garden. From the beginning there is an indication that the *'ādām* is to return to the world to cultivate/serve (*'bd*) the *'ᵃdāmâ* from which the *'ādām* is taken (3.23). It should be noted that the *'ādām* is not created from the *'ᵃdāmâ* of the outside world (*'ereṣ*). The garden has not been 'planted' when the *'ādām* is created. The *'ādām* must grow up in order to fulfil the original potential.

As a parent prepares young adults to leave home and live on their own, so the parent Adonay Elohim prepares the young humans to leave the garden by clothing them fully (a sign of civilization and maturation), making them socially acceptable to go out into the world (3.21). When they are mature enough, Adonay Elohim sends them forth into the adult world, so that they too can become parents (4.1).

The traditional understanding of the garden has been that of a paradise, coming from the Septuagint translation of Hebrew *gan* (garden) as Greek *paradeisos* (enclosed park, pleasure ground). The understanding of 'paradise' has changed over the centuries, to the point that it is now a place void of oppositional forces. That concept, though it is a misunderstanding of the original Greek, can be retained, as long as the garden remains a 'paradise' for children who are unaware of the oppositional forces of life. But it cannot be a place for immature grown-ups who are seeking to escape God's oppositional forces. Thus God

places *kᵉrûbîm* and a revolving flaming sword to guard the way to the Tree of Life, or Immature Knowledge of Life (3.24). The idea of childhood as a paradise which needs to be protected from outside danger is particularly important in today's world, where children are given guns and stones to fight adult battles of death when they do not even understand the concept of death. Childhood should be a time of delight, a paradise 'cultivated' and 'protected' by parents. The myth, in its wisdom, suggests that, for growing and maturing children, this is the best kind of environment.

f. *Symbols: Water*

The garden contains one more symbol of the oppositional forces of life: the water of the river. Water is symbolic of death, when it is uncontrolled (too much or too little), and life, when it is controlled, because it produces growth and fertility. Growth is essential for maturation, and the power of fertility is essential for mature male and female sexuality to produce life. The Tree of Knowing, the River of Eden, and the snake have been placed in the garden from the beginning by Adonay Elohim, and are all symbolic of the maturation that will occur. But, at first, the humans are 'naked and not ashamed' in the childhood world of the garden, surrounded by symbols that point to the process of maturation.

g. *Word Plays: 'ādām/'ᵃdāmâ*

The next symbols that need to be investigated are wordplays. As stated earlier, wordplays indicate the emphasis of the myth and relatedness between separate items. The initial wordplay is between *'ādām* (human) and *'ᵃdāmâ* (ground). Although the word *'ādām* is masculine, here it represents human beings in general as well as, more specifically, the male character in the myth. The *'ādām* is originally a unity with the *'ᵃdāmâ*. In its creation or birth, the *'ādām* is separated from the *'ᵃdāmâ* and formed into a *nepeš ḥayyâ* (living being). This shows the intimate relatedness or unity between the *'ādām* and the *'ᵃdāmâ* and the fact that 'life' is differentiation or separation. Linguistically, there is phonic

similarity between the two words. The word *'ādām* is actually contained in the word *'ᵃdāmâ* and can be separated from it. This linguistic play lends further emphasis to the *'ādām*'s intimate relatedness to, yet differentiation from, the *'ᵃdāmâ*. As an adult the *'ādām*'s primary role is life-sustaining: the *'ādām* is to cultivate/serve (*'bd*; not exploit or plunder) the *'ᵃdāmâ* of the world (2.5; 3.23). As a parent the *'ādām* is also to cultivate/serve (*'bd*) and protect (*šmr*) the garden/childhood world (2.15; the reference foreshadows eventual maturation and the parenting role). There is never any indication that the *'ādām* carries out either function as a child. So maturation is critical.

The human will have multiple relatedness to the *'ᵃdāmâ* to the animals (*ḥayyat/'ôp/bᵉhēmâ*), and to the *'iššâ* (woman). The *'ādām*'s relationship to the animals is on a different level than the *'ādām*'s relationship to the *'ᵃdāmâ*. or the *'iššâ*. The *'ādām* is related to the animals in that the *'ādām* and the animals are called *nepeš ḥayyâ*[1] (living being; 2.7; 2.19) and the *'ādām* and the animals are both formed from the ground (*'ᵃdāmâ*), but there is no further wordplay indicating intimacy.

h. *Wordplays: 'îš/'iššâ*

The second wordplay is *'îš* (man) and *'iššâ* (woman). And here the terms indicate sexual differentiation. It is not a question of the *'ādām* being sexually undifferentiated before the creation of the woman, but of the *'ādām*'s being *unaware* of sexual differentiation. When the *'ādām* has matured enough to be aware of sexual differentiation, the woman is created. The *'iššâ* is originally a unity with the *'îš*. In her creation or birth the *'iššâ* is separated from the *'îš*. This attempts to account for the powerful physical and psychological draw between the sexes. The intimate tie is stressed by the *'ādām*'s statement that she is 'bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh' (2.23).[2] Linguistically, there is

1. Considered by many as a gloss here and in 2.19.

2. Brueggemann (1970: 532-42) assumes that 'flesh' refers to the external being, which is physically and psychologically weak; and 'bone' refers to the internal being, which is physically and psychologically strong, making men and women equally strong and weak. He does not feel it refers to biological derivation but to commonality of

phonic similarity between *'iššâ* and *'îš* but, unlike the first wordplay, the word *'iššâ* is not contained in the word *'îš* and, therefore, cannot be separated from it. Linguistically, the unity/separation does not work here.[1] This noticeable incongruity points to the main action of the myth: the need for a change, namely, maturation. In the story the *'iššâ* is portrayed as being born or separated from the *'îš* in order to establish her physical and psychological unity with him. When the *'iššâ* matures, she will have the ability to produce life; then *'îš* will be separated from *'iššâ* (Gen. 4.1), portraying the unity and separation of the birth process. Then, linguistically, the wordplay would work because the word *'îš* is contained in and can be separated from the word *'iššâ*. This wordplay shows the relatedness between men and women and the need for maturation in order that the woman produce life.

i. *Wordplays: ḥawwâ/ḥayyâ or ḥāy*

The woman will also have multiple relatedness. She is related to the man and now, in the third wordplay, she is named *ḥawwâ*[2] (Eve) because she gives birth or is the mother of all *ḥāy* (life/living). This name is only given to her after she is sexually mature and is ready to leave the childhood world of the garden. Sexual maturation is critical for her because her primary role is 'life-producing'. Interestingly, the Hebrew *ḥawwâ* is related to the Aramaic *ḥiwyâ* (snake/life)—another way of pointing to the connection between the woman and life.[3] Like the man's names,

concern, loyalty and responsibility.

1. In private conversation, D.N. Freeman noted that in the Greek translation 2.23 reads, 'she shall be called woman for from *her* man she is taken'. This translation implies a Hebrew text that had the *'iššâ* being separated from *'iššāh*, making the word play work. The change in the Hebrew text may have been done by a scribe who was uncomfortable with the dysfunctional wordplay, and did not understand that the dysfunction had a purpose.

2. *ḥawwâ* is derived from the verbal form *ḥwh*, which is related to *ḥyh*, 'to live'.

3. Observed by ancient interpreters; see Williams 1977: 357-74.

indicating that he is farmer and parent, the two wordplays on the woman's names (*'ĕš/'iššâ* and *ḥawwâ/ḥayyâ*) emphasize the woman's role as woman/wife and parent. Should it be assumed that the woman's role is restricted to being wife and mother? If so, then it must be assumed that the man's role is restricted to being a farmer and parent.

According to S.N. Kramer (1963: 149), in Akkadian the word for 'rib' and the word for 'life' are interchangeable. Thus, at one point in the development of the myth, the woman may have been the 'Lady of the Rib' and the 'Lady of Life' simultaneously. This wordplay is lost in Hebrew, even though the idea of the creation of the woman from the rib and the idea of the 'mother of life' is retained.

j. *Wordplays: 'ārūm/'êrōm/'ārûr*

The fourth wordplay (*'ārûm/'êrōm/'ārûr*) concerns the perception of the symbolism of the snake and its symbolic functioning in the myth. This wordplay is marginally homophonous rather than homonymous. Before maturation begins through the immature awareness of a child, the snake is perceived as only *'ārûm* (cleverly wise). After the human and woman have become aware of being *'êrōm* (naked) and the next stage of maturation has begun, then through the more mature awareness of a young adult the snake is perceived as both *'ārûm* (cleverly wise), superior to the other wild animals, and *'ārûr* (shamed because he crawls on his belly), inferior to the other animals. Now the snake/life is perceived as existing squarely in the tension of the oppositional forces (*'ārûm* and *'ārûr*), and the wordplay establishes the snake's critical role in this stage of the maturation process (awareness of being *'êrōm*). It also must be remembered that the parent Adonay Elohim initiates the maturation process through the creation of the animals and the woman; but the critical stage, the acquisition of mature knowledge, has to come through experience in life ('seminars with snakes'; Clines 1990: 46).

k. *Synchronic Structure: Oppositional Forces*

The last clue for a fresh interpretation of the myth comes from the synchronic or deep structure of the myth, which reveals an interplay of the major oppositional forces that characterize life. Lévi-Strauss (1955: 81-106) feels that the meaning of a myth is not found primarily in the 'isolated elements' that one reads diachronically, but in the way these elements are combined synchronically into bundles that share common themes. These bundles form the deep or synchronic structure. To find the bundles, it is necessary to break the myth into the smallest possible sentences or elements and group them together according to theme. Once the bundles of themes have been laid out, the myth can be read synchronically. In the Genesis myth the bundles form pairs of oppositional forces, which the humans will be able to discern upon eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowing Good and Bad. There are four major bundles of oppositional pairs: unity and separation, potential and limitation, high/superior and low/inferior, and wild/uncontrolled and cultivated/controlled. Each of the bundles of oppositional forces not only portrays the binary quality of life in general, but the bundles found in nature also foreshadow their occurrence in the maturation process: images of nature become images of society. Lévi-Strauss stresses that human beings need consonance between their perception of social and cosmic levels of experience. When adolescent maturation begins in ch. 3, the foreshadowing ends.

1. *Unity and Separation*

The unity and separation bundle has already been partially revealed in the wordplays, so it is a good starting point. The first group of unity and separation oppositional forces are found in the text preceding the 'sin and fall' of the traditional interpretation, suggesting that oppositional forces are part of the structure of God's creation, not something that occurs as a result of the 'fall'. Adonay Elohim makes or 'separates' heaven and earth (2.4b), as Adonay Elohim also 'separates' the *'ādām* from the *'ᵃdāmâ* (2.7) and the *'iššâ* from the *'îš*: cosmic creation

introduces human creation (Trible 1978: 74).[1] Unity and separation describe not only creation but also the life/death process. The *'ādām* is a unity with the *'ᵃdāmâ*, and birth is separation. Though the *'ādām* retains a significant degree of the original unity, life is separation. When human beings die, they will once again return to the original unity with the clay/dust of the ground, thus giving death positive value within the overall cyclical life process. Within the unity/separation/unity paradigm, death is not finality or nothingness; it is a return to an original state, a return to the earth, a return to the source of new life. The *'ᵃdāmâ* (feminine) gives birth to the *'ādām* (masculine), so death is a type of return to the womb. In forming the woman, the *'ādām* is put in a deep sleep, returned to a state of unconsciousness: the *'ādām* is virtually dead. Then from death comes life.

This paradigm portrays the cyclical aspect of life and death as one unified process, one reality. The cyclical nature of life is further accentuated in the myth by the constant use of the imperfect consecutive tense and participles, to convey the idea of ongoing or repeated action. And to further portray the cyclical nature of life, certain important life stages are repeated in the myth (*'ādām*'s separation from the *'ᵃdāmâ* [2.7; 3.19, 23], putting the *'ādām* in the garden [2.8, 15], and expelling him from the childhood world of the garden [3.23, 24]).

In the section on the River of Eden (2.10-14), which some exegetes feel has no meaning in the story,[2] nature offers a paradigm, a foreshadowing, of the unity and separation which will characterize the overall life process and the maturation process. The river functions symbolically and also, to a limited degree only, geographically. There is one river in the garden (childhood world), signifying original unity or the lack of differentiation of infancy. But Adonay Elohim has said that it is

1. Trible has identified this unity and separation theme but, within the structure of the traditional interpretation, it is difficult for her to make complete sense of it.

2. Von Rad says, 'This passage has no significance for the unfolding action, nor are its elements mentioned elsewhere... It must therefore be considered as originally an independent element which is attached to the story of Paradise but without being able to undergo complete inner assimilation' (1961: 79).

not good to be alone or have a lack of differentiation (2.18). Next the river separates into four heads or rivers, signifying increasing separation or differentiation which characterizes the maturation process. So far the river has functioned symbolically. Each of the four rivers,[1] which may geographically symbolize the cardinal points of the compass, encircles one fourth of the world, thus together they encircle the entire world, creating a symbol of unity or wholeness characteristic of maturity at its best or most accomplished.

The mention of gold,[2] bdellium[3] and lapis lazuli in 2.11-12 may symbolize the marriage/dowry/bride price, and create a link with 2.24 where 'marriage' bonding is foreshadowed. In 2.24 the marriage bonding is described in terms of unity and separation: 'A man (*'îš*) separates from his father and mother and unites with his woman (*'iššâ*) and they become one flesh' (2.24). In a society where women literally leave their father's house, while men after marriage often remained within the patriarchal household, the text can appear strange. The fact that women separate (physically and psychologically) from father and mother may be assumed. The text, then, establishes the fact that the man separates psychologically, though not always physically, from his father and mother. The *'îš* and the *'iššâ* form 'one flesh', a new unity. The phrase 'one flesh' is ambiguous, symbolizing both a psychological unity or loss of distinction between the self and the other, and the production of a child who will separate from his father and mother and unite with his woman...and so on and so on. This is the first suggestion of parenthood. Producing children is one way a predominantly

1. There has been much speculation on the location of the Pishon and Gihon rivers, which form a rhyming pair (see Wallace 1985; Driver 1904; Speiser 1955; Coote and Ord 1989; Wyatt 1981: 10-21). The text gives an important clue by including the east–west orientation of the Tigris and Euphrates. It can be assumed that, although unknown, the Pishon and Gihon are north–south rivers. Cf. Levenson (1976: 29) and Clifford (1972: 101) who tie Gihon to the spring of Gihon that supplies water to Jerusalem.

2. According to Driver, Havilah may be northeast Arabia on the west coast of the Persian Gulf, an area famed for its gold (1904: 39-40).

3. Probably valued for its fragrance.

group-oriented society copes with death. The individual has continued life through children and the children's children, all of whom contribute to the continued existence of the group, generation after generation. Verse 15 belongs with 2.10-14 because it foreshadows the parenthood role. As a parent the *'ādām* will cultivate/serve and protect the childhood world of the garden, as Adonay Elohim has cultivated and protected the childhood world of the garden. The reference in 2.24 of a man (*'îš*) separating from father and mother will also apply to the *'ādām* who, when sexually and intellectually mature enough, will separate from the garden and from mother/father/Adonay Elohim (3.22-24). Hence, in 4.1 *'ādām* and *ḥawwâ* unite with one another and become one flesh in the birth of Cain.

One of the important contributions of the unity/separation theme is its emphasis on the cyclical nature of life.[1] The mythical portrayal of time, the symbolism of the tree and the snake, all contain this cyclical element. What is taught in the myth is *not* that the life-enhancing oppositional force has lost to the death-threatening force, or that fulfilment has lost to fragmentation, but that existence is a continual process of life *and* death, and a continual process of unity *and* separation. In our extreme individual-orientation of modern society this sense of being part of the community of humanity, with its cyclical flow of life/death (oppositional forces), has been lost. In our orientation the individual ego becomes obsessed with 'self-preservation', and the oppositional structure of life becomes threatening.

The theme of unity and separation is certainly a concern of Israelite society during and after the division of the kingdom so, in this light, the myth has underlying political implications and reflects the social values and problems of the monarchy. Similarly, Ackerman shows that the Court History attempts to create unity, yet there is constant separation within the house of David and the nation that will lead to the eventual separation of the nation.[2]

1. Trible (1978: 74) has noted the cyclical design of the overall myth, as well as the cyclical repetition of key words and phrases.

2. Ackerman 1990:60. Compare to the radically different interpretation of Kennedy 1990: 3-14.

2. *Limitation and Potential*

The second bundle of oppositional forces is limitation and potential. Again, nature forms the paradigm and foreshadows the human condition, and once again these oppositional forces exist before the 'fall' of the traditional interpretation. When the earth is first created it is dry, infertile, limited; it has no potential for growth or production. Then there is a change: Adonay Elohim causes subterranean water to rise up from the ground and water the earth, so that it becomes fertile and has potential for growth and production (2.4b-6). The change in the earth parallels the change that will occur in maturation, when humans go from being infertile children to fertile adults.

Adonay Elohim allows the *'ādām* as a child to eat from all of the trees (potential), except the Tree of Mature Knowledge (limitation; 2.16-17).[1] In establishing this limitation Adonay Elohim is, for now, protecting the children. But Adonay Elohim has filled the garden with the potential for maturation.

When they are ready, the snake (recurring life) encourages the woman to eat of the Tree of Mature Knowledge (now it is potential), so her eyes will be opened and she will have insight like her parent Adonay Elohim (3.5, 22). Although the woman stands on the threshold between childhood and adulthood, she still perceives the world through the idealism of youth. She is only able to perceive the good or potential of eating/maturation (3.6), but not the limitations, despite the fact that the snake said she would discern good *and* bad. In this circumstance the snake cannot correct her perception; it must wait for maturation to reveal the limitation. She must learn the reality of adulthood from experience—the Tree of Knowledge is experiential as well as intellectual.

The snake has the potential of being cleverly wise and superior and, simultaneously, limited by the shame (*'ārûr*) of crawling on its belly in an attitude of inferiority. The ground (*'ᵃdāmâ*) has the potential of producing food, and the limitation of being cursed/limited (*'ārūr*) by producing inedible vegetation.

1. Cf. Trible who states that the Tree of Knowledge offers 'knowledge not given by God, knowledge that removes the limits of humanity and merges it with divinity' (1978: 112).

In 3.16 the woman learns the reality of female adult life: potential and limitation. Adonay Elohim says,

> I will certainly increase your physical effort (*'iṣṣābôn*) and your conception (*hērôn*),
> With labor (*'ēṣeb*) you shall bear sons/children;
> Your desire (*t'šûqâ*) shall be for your man (*'îš*) but he will rule (*mšl*) over you (3.16).[1]

Each parallel verse relates to the previous one and expands the thought, giving movement to the narrative. The woman's critical potential and power will be that of her sexual power to produce life, with its accompanying sexual desire for her man, and her contribution of physical labor (*'iṣṣābôn; not* pain) to the subsistence activities of the group. But in the rural, agrarian context indicated in 3.17-19[2] her limitation will be: (1) increased labor/effort, including the labor (*'ēṣeb*) of childbirth, accompanied by its inherent pain, and the general physical labor (*'iṣṣābôn*) required because of increased childbirth; and (2) the rule/control (*mšl*) of the man. Although, from a feminist's point of view, it would be nice to rewrite the text, excluding the concept of male 'rule', the text must be analyzed as it stands. In the Hebrew Bible *mšl* is used to express a range of ideas from God's control over the natural world and humanity (e.g. Ps. 22.28; 89.9), to an individual's self-control (Prov. 16.32). Most importantly, the text only speaks of ruling the woman's sexual desire, not her entire life, so this is not generalized, oppressive male domination. But why is it necessary to rule or control the woman's sexual power? First, the woman's sexual power exists dynamically in the tension between life and death, so her power can produce either life or death (particularly in the ancient world, where the mortality rate for childbirth is high). So it must be used with great care and respect, not casually. Secondly, within a predominantly group-oriented society the group/ household is the primary source of identity and support, so general group and household boundaries are strong and

1. My translation is based on that of Meyers (1988: 95-121).

2. See the works of Meyers (1978: 91-103; 1983: 569-93; 1988) for a fuller explanation of the socio-economic conditions of the Israelite highlands.

essential. The woman's power builds the group, both the household and in turn the society of Israel, so it must be confined within the boundaries of the group/household.

What is the nature of the control? As Carol Meyers has pointed out, because of depopulation problems (due to endemic disease, high infant and adolescent mortality, high mortality rate of women in the childbearing years, and warfare),[1] her life-producing power must increase to meet the demands of social need. To guarantee the survival of the household and the nation, Adonay Elohim increases conception (3.16a). The increased birthrate entails added labor/effort on her part in all areas of life and, most of all, added risk to her life. The result is reluctance on the part of females to enter the risk-prone activity of childbirth, despite the fact that conception is a blessing. Female reluctance is overcome by a combination of the woman's own passion and the rule or control (*mšl*) of the man, voicing the social need of increased birthrate for the sake of household and national survival (Meyers 1988: 112-21). In addition, the male control (*mšl*) channels female sexual desire within the boundaries of the household. Control of the woman's sexual desire is a type of family and societal boundary which restricts her sexual power to a controlled arena that benefits the group/household, not foreigners/outside groups. If her sexual power is uncontrolled and extends beyond the boundaries of her household or Israel, she has the potential of 'building the house' of another group, which is threatening to the existence of the family and Israel. It is an issue of control of a dangerous yet critically essential power that impacts on the family and society as a whole, not an issue of the submissiveness and inferiority of women. Both kinds of control manage female sexual power for the good of the overall needs of the group, not individual male ego gratification. There is a big difference between controlling the woman's sexuality for the sake of the well-being of the group as a whole (group-oriented thinking), and controlling the woman's sexuality for the sake of individual, male ego gratification (individual-oriented thinking). And, equally important,

1. See the works of Meyers (1978; 1983: 569-93; 1988).

male 'rule/control' is set within the context of realization of the tension between potential and limitation. Potential cannot be unlimited, and limitation cannot destroy potential. Male control/limitation of female sexuality cannot eliminate or radically restrict female potential; female potential has to contribute to the general well-being of the group.

In 3.17-19a the man learns the reality of male adult life: potential and limitation. Adonay Elohim says,

> Cursed/limited (*'ᵃrûrâ*) is the ground (*'ᵃdāmâ*) in regard to you.
> With physical effort (*'iṣṣābôn*) you shall eat all the days of your life. Wild thorns and thistles she shall bring forth for you as you eat the cultivated grains (*'ēśeb*) of the field.
> By the sweat of your face you shall eat food.

The ground has both potential of producing edible plants, and the limitation/curse of producing inedible plants. This last limitation should not come as a surprise, since Adonay Elohim creates the wild and cultivated plants in the beginning (2.5). The *'ādām*'s critical potential and power will be that of producing cultivated, edible plants from the ground to sustain the increased population produced by the woman. But in a rural, agrarian context, his limitation will be the increased physical effort (*'iṣṣābôn*) that food production for the enlarged household requires, particularly when the ground also produces wild thorns and thistles.[1] It is important to keep in mind that when the man 'rules' the woman's sexuality, and she produces more children to build the household, this increases the demand for his physical labor as well. So his 'rule' of the woman (voicing the need for more children within his household) cannot exceed his capacity to sustain the life she produces. And although it is not mentioned in the text but probably assumed, Carol Meyers points out that the conversion of raw plants, grown and harvested by the man, into edible food, along with its distribution, is under the control of the woman (e.g. 1 Sam. 8.11-13;

1. In this technological age we have to be reminded that exercise/work is essential for the functioning and longevity of the body. Yet some commentators consider work to be a curse (e.g. von Rad 1961; Gunkel 1910). Contrast with Wyatt 1988: 117-22.

Meyers 1988: 145-48). Without women, the physical effort of men does not sustain life.

From the point of view of the text, control or limitation of the central potential or power of men and women is not completely in their own hands—control of the woman's potential comes from labor and the man (*'iššâ/'îš*), and control of the man's potential comes from labor and the ground (*'ādām/'ᵃdāmâ*). It is another way of saying that human craving for excessive or unlimited control over life is not healthy or realistic. The myth stresses that life is lived in the tension of oppositional forces, that potential is in tension with limitation, that control is in tension with lack of control. Gen. 1.28 grants human beings the ability to manage or control the earth and its potential, but this privilege does not include excessive, pathological control that undermines the earth's potential. I have already applied this principle to male 'control' of female sexuality.

In the traditional interpretation, the sections on the woman and man (3.16-19)[1] are considered 'curses' or 'punishments' for sin. In my interpretation the limitations articulated in these sections are the normal limitations of life (as perceived by a group-oriented society), the reality of life created and ordained by God in the beginning that humans must become aware of when they mature. It is important to note that the limitation always stands in tension with the potential. There is no one-sided movement, from pure potential to pure limitation, as commentators have often assumed. The reality of life is that the structure of the universe, and life in general, are based on the principle of a tension between oppositional forces. Gen. 2.4b–3.24 is a myth that helps people accept and cope with the reality of life as God created it—not a picture of fallen life caused by human sin.

One of the objections to eliminating the idea of 'curse' or 'punishment' from these sections is the phrase, *'kî* you did this', which introduces the discourse with the snake (3.14) and the *'ādām* (3.17). *kî* can be translated in the causal sense ('because'), which would indicate a change from the previous state or,

1. I am still in the process of working through the very complicated symbolism of 3.15.

simply, as an introduction to direct narration (e.g. Gen. 21.30; 29.33; similar to the Greek *hoti* [Lk. 4.21]), in which case it is untranslated. In either case what is suggested is a change in awareness, caused by the beginning of adolescent maturation. 'You did this'—that is, you began to mature—so now you must become aware of the reality of life. Life is not just pure potential, as children assume. Life is a constant dynamic of potential and limitation—certainly a concern of society during the founding and duration of the monarchy.

3. *High/Superior and Low/Inferior*

The third bundle of oppositional forces is high/superior and low/inferior. Adonay Elohim creates the heavens (high) and the earth (low); the rain falls from above (high) and the subterranean water rises up from below (low); Adonay Elohim creates the human from the breath of life of Adonay Elohim (high) and the clay/dust of the ground (low). Adonay Elohim creates the birds of the heavens (high) and the animals of the fields/plains (low). The snake is simultaneously the wisest, most superior (high) and the lowest, most inferior of the animals. In dealing with these natural high and low issues, the myth forms a paradigm for superior and inferior social status and political relations: nature is used to justify social and political superiority and inferiority—certainly a concern of the royal monarchy, with its social stratification and functioning in the international political arena.

4. *Wild/Uncontrolled and Cultivated/Controlled*

The fourth bundle of oppositional forces is wild/uncontrolled and cultivated/controlled. When Adonay Elohim creates the heavens and earth, the wild/natural/uncontrolled vegetation (*śîaḥ*) of the field/plains (which also includes wild and inedible thorns and thistles; 3.18), and the cultivated/controlled vegetation or grains (*ʿēśeb* of the field/plains) have not yet sprouted, because there is no rain and no *ʾādām* to cultivate/ serve the *ʾᵃdāmâ* (2.5). It is important to note that only in regard to the cultivation and control by humans is wild vegetation (thorns and thistles) problematic. The uncontrolled (unchanneled) subterranean water (*ʿēd*) contrasts with the controlled water of the River of Eden. The *ʾādām* gives names to all the domesticated

beasts/cattle (*bᵉhēmâ*; owned and used by humans) and all the wild animals (*ḥayyat*) of the field/plain (2.20). The two major elements in the maturation process are the snake, which is a *wild* animal and the Tree of Knowledge, which is a *cultivated* plant. This suggests that maturation happens naturally, *and* with some human control or effort.

The issue in the controlled/uncontrolled bundle is human control—and lack of control—over life. Nature forms the paradigm for human beings. This is probably the hardest lesson in the myth: the ability to control and accept lack of control over life and the arbitrariness of death. It is particularly difficult in modern society, where human beings have created sophisticated illusions of control over life/death (technology, for example).

These are the important oppositional forces, the 'knowing good and bad', that the man and woman must become aware of when they begin to mature by eating of the Tree of Mature Knowledge, and begin to experience life as God created it from the beginning. Eating of the Tree of Mature Knowledge means learning to discern and accept both poles of the essential binary forces of life, which allows them to relate to life and, most of all, to God on a mature level. As long as commentators perpetutate the idea that limitation, pain, and death are punishment imposed on all of creation for human sin (an extremely ego-centered presumption), human beings will neither accept life as God created it nor accept the Creator.

One of the subtle points the myth makes is that humans tend to make the oppositional forces absolute 'good' or absolute 'bad'. But in reality sometimes a force is good and sometimes it is bad. For example, unity is good when it characterizes the bond between men and women, but it is bad when it characterizes a human without community. Interestingly, the text never says that the *'ādām* returning to the original unity with the *'ᵃdāmâ* (death) is bad. Death is presented neutrally, not as punishment, but as part of the natural cycle of unity and separation of life.

1. *Pressing Issues*

1. *Why Is it the Woman who Interacts with the Snake?*[1]

Since the myth deals with the process of maturation, then perhaps it is because women mature earlier than men. In any society that takes note of human nature this is an easy phenomenon to observe. The fact that the woman matures first is verified in the myth by the fact that she receives her name *ḥawwâ* (Eve/Life), which is only used of sexually mature women, before they leave the garden, whereas the word *'ādām* is not used as a proper name for the man until after they have left the garden, when the man has matured enough to become a parent (4.1).

In addition, Cheryl Exum, in studying the concept of 'mother in Israel' in Genesis, Exodus and Judges, has observed that,

> A striking paradox emerges in these stories of mothers: Whereas the important events in Israelite tradition are experienced by men, they are often set in motion and determined by women... Though frequently ignored in the larger story of Israel's journey toward the promise, the matriarchs act at strategic points that move the plot, and thus the promise, in the proper direction toward its fulfillment (Exum 1985: 76).

In Gen. 2.4b–3.24 the woman acts at a strategic point that moves the plot in the proper direction: maturation and the fulfillment of the potential of life producing and life sustaining. Maturation is set in motion by the woman.

Finally, the snake symbolizes recurring life and wisdom, and the woman (*ḥawwâ*/Life), the mother of the living, is related to recurring life and seeks wisdom, giving the snake and the woman a natural tie. Within Israelite tradition, wisdom is personified as a woman (Proverbs 1–9; see Camp 1981, 1985). It is interesting to observe that in giving the woman the title '*ḥawwâ*, the mother of all living', the woman supplants the snake (Aramaic *ḥiwyâ*) as a symbol of recurring life.

1. For misogynous readings, see von Rad 1961: 90; Driver 1904: 44; McKenzie 1954: 541-72.

2. *Does the Woman Seduce the Man?*

Does the woman 'seduce' the man, as some traditional interpretations imply, thereby making her responsible for bringing sin into the world?[1] The language gives no indication of seduction: 'She took (*lqḥ*) from its fruit and she ate (*'kl*) and gave (*ntn*) also to her *'îš* with her and he ate (*'kl*)' (3.6b). As Trible observes, in the conversation with God the *'ādām* does not indicate that the woman 'tempted' or 'seduced' him, but that she 'gave' (*ntn*) him the fruit, in the same way that Adonay Elohim 'gave' (*ntn*) him the woman. No one is arguing that God 'tempted' or 'seduced' the *'ādām* by giving him the woman. In addition, the Hebrew Bible does not speak negatively about 'seduction' by one's wife, which leads to the production of life and the continued life of the household/nation. This has a positive value in Israelite society. Only 'seduction' by foreign or strange women, which leads to the production of life for another group, has a negative value in that society.[2] It is only within predominantly individual-oriented societies with overpopulation problems that sexuality and women, with their natural power to produce children, can be devalued, because survival depends on limiting population. In a group-oriented society with depopulation problems that is unthinkable. But there is a tendency to interpret the Genesis myth, and the entire Hebrew Bible, from a modern perspective, without taking the different cultural factors into account.

3. *Gender Equality, Value and Control*

In light of the potential and limitation articulated for the man and woman, the question of gender equality in this text (not the entire Hebrew Bible) is interesting to address. The myth speaks from a patriarchal perspective, but patriarchal societies do not have universal shape, as is generally assumed. Cross-cultural studies show that there are significant differences between patriarchal perspectives in predominantly group-oriented societies,

1. See Higgins 1976: 639-47 for a discussion of the misreading as seduction.

2. For a discussion of seduction by a foreign woman, see Newsom 1989: 142-60.

and patriarchal perspectives in predominantly individual-oriented societies. Often in predominantly group-oriented agrarian societies, men and women share mutually in the tasks of survival (life-producing and food-producing) and, consequently, the status of women is high. In the Genesis text the role of the man is that of being a life-sustaining farmer and parent, and the role of the woman is that of being a life-producing wife/mother and worker. Clearly the myth does not try to define the full scope of either men's or women's roles within Israelite society, but reduces them to their essence for survival. Each has potential and limitation: female production of life is controlled by the male, and male production of food is limited by the uncontrolled aspects of nature. As such, there is a semblance of equality of roles. Each contributes significantly to, and is critical for, the survival of the group. This should indicate that the status of women reflected in the text is reasonably high. The woman functions not as an appendage to the man but as an individual contributing her critical share.

But the answer to the question of equality cannot be determined until the value of the woman is understood. Does male rule of the woman's reproductive power imply the devaluation of the woman? Is she only a 'second sex'? Hardly! She has the power to produce life; it is an awesome and dangerous power, but absolutely critical for survival! The woman's power is a direct, inherent power. The man's power to sustain life by producing food is an indirect one; it is a power inherent in the ground that the man 'cultivates', and into which he pours his labor. There is no new human life without women's productive power, and human life cannot be sustained without men's productive power. The text indicates a mutually dependent relationship and mutual valuation. In modern society, where over-population is the norm and salvation is not symbolized in terms of generations of progeny, the inherent potential/power of women is devalued. This devaluation should not be read into the Genesis myth.

It is in the light of this value and semblance of equality that the phrase 'I will make for him a *'ēzer kᵉnegdô'* (2.18b) should be read. An *'ēzer* is a 'helper', an individual or group who delivers

from a predicament of danger or need.[1] The word *'ēzer* carries no connotations of superiority or inferiority built into it. For example, when a suzerain helps a vassal, the suzerain remains politically superior. When a vassal helps a suzerain, the vassal remains inferior. It is the cultural context that determines superiority and inferiority, not the act of helping.[2] *kᵉnegdô* is the remainder of an earlier more frequent idiom (Koehler and Baumgartner 1951: 591), meaning 'as his counterpart' or 'partner'. This term signifies a reciprocal relationship—equality yet difference. It denotes a beneficial relationship of mutual assistance—she produces life and the *'ādām* sustains life. Inferior or superior social status is not indicated by the phrase. Their equality and difference is verified in 2.23, where the woman is described by the *'ādām* as 'Bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called *'iššâ* because from *'îš* she is taken'.

A related issue is that of the creation of the animals, who are also intended as *'ēzer kᵉnegdô*. Are the animals Adonay Elohim's mistake? Is Adonay Elohim experimenting with creation? I do not think so. The animals are an important stage in the *'ādām*'s development. As a child, the *'ādām* has the first experience of differentiation of self from others with the animals. It is an experience that stimulates the *'ādām*'s intellectual capacity to use language for communication, and to order or differentiate one animal from another and from the self. Like many children, the *'ādām* learns 'relationship' with the animals,[3] because they are *nepeš ḥayyâ* like the *'ᵃdāmâ*. The animals 'help' the *'ādām* begin to mature. The snake helps the humans make their major transition into adult life. This early relationship and mutual tie with the animals (including the snake) will become a beneficial relationship for the *'ādām* as an adult. The animals as *'ēzer kᵉnegdô* will deliver the *'ādām* from a predicament of need, in

1. See Wilfong 1988: 58-63 who shows that *'ēzer* is used twelve times for help from God and five times for human aid from a powerful army or prince. For further discussion see Vos n.d.: 16.

2. See Clines 1990: 25-48 for a discussion of the implications of 'helping'.

3. In the Gilgamesh Myth, before Enkidu begins to mature he runs with, and relates to, the animals.

that the *'ādām* will form a partnership with them in the production and protection (the snake) of food.

There are two final issues in regard to the control of the woman. Many commentators have suggested that naming is controlling. In the initial stages of the maturation process the *'ādām*, as a child, differentiates himself first from the animals by naming them and then sexually from the woman by naming her. The primary function of the child's naming both the animals and the woman (*'iššâ*) is an expression of awareness of increasing differentiation and development of linguistic ability, not male supremacy and control on the part of a child. When the *'ādām* names the woman 'Eve/Life, mother of all living', he gives her an honorific title that describes her critical power and high status. Again, control is not the primary issue here.

One of the most common arguments for the inequality of women stems from the fact that the woman is created last and created from the man, which in some traditional interpretations makes her secondary, dependent/derived and inferior. It is interesting that the man is *not* considered secondary, dependent/derived and inferior to the ground because he comes into being after the creation of the earth and is created from it. Both wordplays (*'ādām/'ᵃdāmâ* and *'iššâ/'îš*) are used to establish intimacy yet separation, not superiority and inferiority. In addition, as many scholars have pointed out, in Genesis 1 humans are created last and are considered the culmination of creation. Why is the same thing not assumed in Gen. 2.4b–3.24? In fact, if the text is examined carefully, it is evident that the wordplays determine the order of creation, not a concept of superiority and inferiority.

4. *Image of God and the Relationship between Humanity and God*

The image of God portrayed in the myth is that of a parent. The role of mother, father or parent is not uncommon among the gods and goddesses of the ancient Near East. In the myth Adonay Elohim[1] incorporates the male parenting role of

1. Van Wolde (1989: 203-204) has posited a unique explanation of the two names for God in the myth: the two names indicate God's dual role.

'planting/cultivating' the childhood world of the garden, and 'protecting' it until the children are mature enough to leave it. And Adonay Elohim incorporates the female parenting role of creating life. The familiar scene of a parent teaching the children about life (cf. Prov. 1–9) is depicted in 3.16-19, as Adonay Elohim teaches the *'ādām* and the woman about life. The text claims Adonay Elohim as the paradigm for the parent of the patriarchal family, thus strengthening the claim of locating the authority structure for wisdom in the patriarchal family.

When the humans are matured, they will have the ability to discriminate the oppositional forces of life (mature knowledge), the ability to cultivate/serve the earth, the procreative power to produce life, and the role of cultivating/serving and protecting the childhood world of the garden. In that respect they will become like their parent God. Consequently, in 3.22a Adonay Elohim says, 'Now the *'ādām* has become one of us, knowing good and bad'. In other words, the humans have become adults, with adult knowledge and adult roles—they follow the image of God portrayed in the myth. And, of course, as long as the humans continue breathing they will always retain their original affinity with their parent—the breath of life from God (e.g. Gen. 7.22; Job 32.8; 33.4; 34.14-15).

By the end of the myth the humans have become maturing adults. And now, in case he sends forth his hand and takes also from the Tree of Life and eats and lives continuously, Adonay Elohim sends the *'ādām* forth from the garden to cultivate the *'ᵃdāmâ* from which he is taken (3.22b-23). For adults, eating of the Tree of Life or the Tree of Immature Knowledge of Life means a lack of awareness of oppositional forces, an immature knowledge of life, a return to childhood. For adults it is a

The first divine name (the tetragram) is probably the imperfect form of the verb *hwh* (to become), demonstrating God's dynamic (feminine) life-creating role. The second divine name (Elohim) is used in conjunction with the tetragram throughout the myth, except four times in 3.1, 3, 5. In each of the exceptions Elohim is used in relation to the Tree of Knowing. 'Discernment' characterizes the gods (*'ᵉlōhîm*) in the ancient Near East, so the name Elohim signifies the male role and the tetragram the female role. See Speiser 1964 for the more conventional understanding.

regression, a denial of reality, a denial of God's creation. God is decisive about preventing this regression in adults; God places *kᵉrûbîm* and a revolving flaming sword to guard the way to the Tree of Life (3.24). They are sent forth, not because of jealousy (Trible 1978: 136) on the part of Adonay Elohim over their knowing good and bad, but because they are mature enough to leave the childhood world.

The maturing relationship between the parent Adonay Elohim and the humans is essential to observe. It is not until the humans have begun to mature and are beginning to have the capacity of a mature understanding of life, that Adonay Elohim relates to them through direct dialogue, in which *both* parties speak (3.9-13). Rather than being 'sin and fall', maturation is the beginning of an interactive relationship between God and humans. There is a growing out of an immature, childlike dependence on God in which the humans are passive—that kind of dependence is unrealistic for adults. There is a growing out of a childlike understanding and expectation of life and God. Knowledge is necessary for a realistic relationship with God. The mature relationship, though left ambiguous, is a mutually inclusive dynamic based on independence/separation (freedom), yet also dependence on and unity with creation and God.

m. *Conclusion*

The evidence demonstrates that the myth is about growing out of the childhood world of the garden (infancy [2.7-9], childhood [2.16-20], adolescence [2.21-3.12], early adulthood [3.13-21]),[1] and into the adult world that Adonay Elohim created to be populated and cultivated by mature human beings (3.22-24). It is about finding identity, which does not come from within the individual alone (individual-orientation), but within the context of the community (group-orientation), including the earth and the animals. It is about coming to grips with the inherent oppositional forces of life created by God in the beginning, and about coping with death as a natural and essential part of life. It

1. Van Wolde indicates similar stages (1989: 217-19).

is about maturation. It is a myth that reinforces the values and concerns of monarchical society, which considers the monarchy to be God's intended goal for a mature Israel.

GENDER ROLES AND GENESIS 3.16 REVISITED*

Carol L. Meyers

The investigation of sex roles in ancient Israel is never an easy task because of the imbalance of information in the major source of knowledge about this community, the Hebrew Bible. The asymmetrical legal and public authority of men over women in Israelite society is apparent in many of the legal and narrative portions of the biblical text. The nature of formal transactions such as marriage and property ownership and the male domination of public roles and offices such as the priesthood and court bureaucracy point to a patriarchal society. Biblical materials dealing with such matters constitute the bulk of our information about sex roles in ancient Israel. Yet these kinds of data are incomplete; and the biblical record provides little material that offers direct comment upon the role and status of the female within this patriarchal system.

Nonetheless, the task is not impossible. An optimistic view of the potential for studying ancient gender roles derives from the availability of methodological assistance from the social sciences. Examination of often studied biblical texts, such as the one that will be considered here, can provide fresh insights when set against concepts of human behavior in appropriate and analogous societal contexts. Our return to Genesis 3 will thus be preceded first by a methodological statement and then by an identification of the relevant variables in pre-monarchic Israelite society.

* Reprinted from *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth* (Philadelphia: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1983). This article is offered to David Noel Freedman in deep gratitude for his encouragement of the author's work in this area and in humble indebtedness to his scholarship in his many areas of expertise.

Methodological Statement

During the past several decades, the value of using social scientific concepts in dealing with ancient Israel has become increasingly understood. The people of the Book should not be limited by that Book but rather need to be recognized as a living community which produced that literary testimony to various aspects of its societal dynamics and religious beliefs. Comprehending the ideology-bearing narratives and formulations that constitute the canonical record cannot be divorced from comprehending the community, in its formation and ongoing vitality, that produced the biblical corpus.

With the emergence of social history as a fundamental key to Israelite history and character, the renewed focus on methodology has been reasonably productive in finding appropriate procedures and strategies for analyzing an ancient society. As biblical scholars have become more comfortable with the disciplines of sociology and anthropology, there has been a decrease in the tendency to identify phenomena cross-culturally at the superficial level without thorough consideration of the validity of the analogy. At the same time, the social sciences themselves have progressed in statistical analyses of data and in the ability to identify correlative sets of societal variables. This aspect of social scientific research is critical, since correlations provide the core of the usefulness of social scientific methodology in studying an ancient population for which the full range of desired information can never be obtained. Sociology and anthropology thus allow at least some of the gaps in our knowledge to be filled inferentially. This process depends on the extent to which the variables can be supplied on the basis of all possible materials: biblical, archaeological, and extra-Israelite ancient literary sources.

Despite the overall productive results which have emerged from critical appraisal of social history in biblical studies, there remains an additional kind of concern about the probability of events having occurred in the way that social reconstruction recreates. For example, a typical response of the critic or skeptic—who may not be one and the same—of the peasant

revolt model of the Conquest (e.g., Mendenhall 1976 and Gottwald 1979), as a way of probing Israelite beginnings, is directed towards the seeming failure of the biblical materials themselves to record such events or circumstances. If there were a large uprising of indigenous Palestinians (Canaanites) against the oppression of their elitist overlords, 'it is a curious anomaly', goes the argument (e.g., Hauser 1978: 10), 'that there is no trace in the biblical traditions of a massive conversion and uprising' such as is proposed.

This criticism needs to be taken seriously. It can be answered in two complementary ways. First, on theoretical grounds the validity of such an objection can be met by taking into account the nature of the biblical sources and learning to 'translate' the religious and symbolic language of the biblical writers into the historical realities which underlay and prompted the religious response. Secondly, specific examples of the existence of evidence in the Bible and other historical documents, such as the El-Amarna letters, for the reconstructions proposed by social scientific analysis need to be educed.

It is the latter task which will concern us here. A presupposition of this task is that the requisite data can in fact be located in some fashion or to some degree in the biblical text. The problem lies not in their existence but rather in their availability. Since the purpose of the ancient literature is so different from the modern techniques and structures we seek to superimpose, the possibility that the data are present in forms that are not readily recognizable must be entertained. We have not yet learned to ask all the right questions; we have not yet become sensitive enough to the subtle ways in which social values and structures are communicated. That the Bible is an extremely complex body of literature is beyond dispute. Within that rich complexity, then, must surely lie the potential for answering new sets of questions.

Models formulated by the social sciences have been extremely useful in providing direction to the quest for information about the ways in which men and women related to each other within the family structure of tribal Israel. This quest is one which is openly predicated upon concerns generated in the sixties and seventies by the women's movement. The models, particularly

those derived from anthropology, are likewise the products of recent research carried out by scholars with sensitivity toward feminist issues. In other words, relevant anthropological studies which can inform an inquiry into gender rules and status in an ancient society have not been available until the past few years.

Descriptions of sex role behaviors have long been a part of the anthropologist's field work. The contributions of Margaret Mead (e.g., 1953) to this aspect of ethnographic pursuits are indeed noteworthy. But the theoretical analyses and correlations that can make sense of this fundamental dimension of human social behavior are just now entering the literature. Personal interest or political concern may have sparked this development, but the intellectual and functional challenge of exploring gender status as a fundamental factor in human society cannot be gainsaid. The proliferation of publications in this field can only be understood by taking into account both kinds of stimuli.

Some sense of the variety and relative success of these recent works can be found in Quinn's excellent review article (1977), 'Anthropological Studies on Women's Status'. Quinn catalogues the treatments of cross-cultural case studies of women's status and also evaluates the various hypotheses which have been offered to deal with observed similarities and differences in the relative status of men and women in various societies. Another review article is particularly helpful in dealing with ancient societies, for which data cannot be retrieved from empirical studies. Conkey and Spector are preparing an essay on 'Archaeology and the Study of Gender' which, in addition to surveying research questions and findings, is concerned with developments in archaeological methods and theory that can foster investigation of sex roles through the archaeological record.

Relevant Variables in Tribal Israel

In another article (Meyers 1983) I have presented a series of concepts that anthropologists have formulated in order, first, to account for the universal disparity in the roles and statuses of the two sexes, and secondly, to comprehend the variety of

cultural patterns of relative sex roles and status that have been identified in cross-cultural studies. Without repeating the discussion of these concepts, a brief summary of their salient features can be made.[1]

Within any society, there exists a division of labor whereby contributive and interlocking roles are assumed by different members of a group. Usually there is a stable and traditional pattern of responsibilities divided along gender lines. This pattern, however, varies enormously from society to society. In some societies the relative contributions of men and women are strikingly askew, with one sex seeming to carry the burden of essential tasks; in others, there is something approaching a balance of labor.

The continuum of possible relative contributions of males and females to societal chores can be correlated with the status of women. While women are never valued as a class more than men, their status can vary a great deal cross-culturally. The societal conditions which tend to produce the least sexual stratification are those in which women make significant contributions in supplying the basic needs of the community. Within certain parameters, societies in which women enjoy relatively high status are those in which women bear a quantitatively large portion of the roles which comprise the productive labor of the community.

These statements about gender roles and sexual status lead to two important questions. First, is there a maximum level at which females can operate and enjoy a high status? Or, stated another way, what is the balance in the division of labor that produces optimal valuation of both males and females? Secondly, what are the variables in a societal configuration that

1. An excellent resource for the social scientific study of gender roles is the anthology *Women, Culture, and Society*, edited by M.Z. Rosaldo and I. Lamphere (1974). In that volume, contributions by M.Z. Rosaldo, M.Z. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere, S.B. Ortner, and P.R. Sanday are particularly relevant to the concepts presented in this paper. In addition, Hamburg (1974), which is published in the useful anthology, Friedl (1975), and Nerlove (1974) have been helpful to our understanding of social scientific information that can be used in examining gender roles in biblical Israel.

can produce such an optimum balance?

I have dealt in my other essay (1983) with both those questions. Again, a brief summation will further this discussion. Answers to both queries revolve around an analysis of the three major spheres of activity which determine the allocation of energies of a group's members and upon which the survival and development of the group depend. Those three activities are protection (through defensive or offensive military actions), production (subsistence: foodstuffs, shelter, clothing), and procreation (child-bearing and child-rearing). The balance of labor in the central area is the critical factor, for therein lies the greatest potential for gender asymmetry on the one hand or near balance on the other hand. Similarly, that is the area in which shifting external factors can exert powerful enough pressure to rearrange traditional sex roles.

The most balanced societies with respect to division of labor along gender lines are those in which subsistence tasks are divided about 60%–40%, male–female. When women contribute about 40% of the subsistence effort, sexual stratification within the society tends to be least marked. This ratio is a reasonable deviation from an equal 50%–50% since it takes into account the fact that some portion of female energy is absorbed in the fixed roles of child-bearing and early nurturing. Male involvement in warfare, while nearly as universal as female involvement in procreation, is far less consistent and demanding and is often non-existent. There is some evidence that in ancient Israel such a 40%–60% balance of labor, with a concomitant high status for women, did exist. The redemption valuations of Leviticus 27 can be viewed as such a pattern. If so, the seeming anomalies in patriarchal Israelite society, with both idealized texts and male dominant materials appearing in the Bible, are thereby comprehensible. At least at some point in Israel's history a high status existed for women and left its mark in the biblical record.

The variables which tend to produce such a balance of labor are those in which the efforts required of females in the subsistence area are appreciable. A variety of exogenous factors can produce such a situation. The absence of a significant number of males due to military service or conscription is an obvious example. The move to a new environment with a concomitant

increase in pioneer tasks (land clearing, water procurement and storage, initial horticultural planting, house building) is another typical circumstance that affects the contributive labor of the group's members.

Both of these factors can be shown to have been operative in tribal Israel, in the early Iron Age. The demands of the latter variable are particularly relevant in that the new environment—the central mountainous core of Palestine—constitutes an ecosystem which is less hospitable to agrarian production than are the nearby coastal areas and broad valleys, to say nothing of the great riverine areas of the Near East. In other words, even without pioneer tasks added to the list of jobs to be done, eking out a livelihood in the rocky, dry hilly country has never been a particularly easy or pleasant task. Self-sufficiency is not easily attained since the soils and terrains most suited to essential grain staples are lacking; extraordinary technological efforts must be made to terrace hillsides and secure water. Furthermore, the delicate timing in the succession of rainy and dry seasons with respect to the growing cycle of basic foodstuffs, grains and olives in particular, causes an inherent insecurity to permeate the subsistence effort.

The earliest Iron Age villages in the hill country could have been established only through the performance of pioneer tasks. An increase of female participation in subsistence activities is a normal correlate of such a situation. We can therefore propose a reconstruction in which women entered the subsistence sphere in a major way.

Furthermore, on the basis of ethnographic analyses of such situations (Brown 1970), the specific and appropriate tasks within that sphere can be delineated along gender lines. When women participate as fully as possible in the agrarian efforts, they typically take on tasks related to hoe agriculture. They tend gardens and orchards and vineyards, which are usually contiguous to their domestic base. Child-care responsibilities can thus be sustained along with subsistence chores, particularly since the rhythm of hoe agriculture can be easily interrupted. In contrast, plow agriculture and the growing of field crops (notably grain) are often carried out at a distance from the domicile, often require some sustained and time-bound periods

of toil, and thus tend to be male responsibilities. Thus the division of labor in the realm of food production under the circumstances of life in early pre-monarchic Israel would have meant an identification of field labor, and thus grain production, as an exclusively male task. Horticulture and viticulture would have proceeded through the efforts of men along with women (and children), with seasonal variations related to times of sowing and reaping.

The reproductive role of women has already been noted as a factor in determining the assignment of agrarian tasks when increased female participation in production must be achieved. That role, too, is somewhat flexible in response to the demands in the subsistence realm. For example, wide age-gaps between children and low fertility is a typical adaptation (Friedl 1975: 137) in societies where women must spend considerable energy and time removed from direct domestic chores and/or child care. In general, the average spacing of children and the number of children per family in any society stands in a dependent relationship to the involvement of women in subsistence tasks, and not vice versa.

This last point is important because it seems that the reproductive role for women in early Israel could not have tolerated such an adaptation to economic exigencies. On the contrary, as I have discussed elsewhere (Meyers 1978: 96-109), there is evidence that the beginnings of Israel coincided with a population decrease of serious proportions. Just when the tasks facing the nascent community increased in volume, the cumulative effects of the famines, wars and plagues of the end of the Late Bronze Age left Canaan relatively underpopulated. Furthermore, pioneer efforts are typically augmented not only by increased female participation but also by large families, by the contributions of children to certain agricultural chores.

Thus the normal decrease in fertility which is an adjustment to economic demands would not have been feasible for early Israel. The biblical record shows the channeling of sexual energy into the reproductive processes. There are a variety of religious sanctions for fertility ('Be fruitful and multiply'); patriarchal and other narratives contain strong themes of overcoming barrenness. These models and exhortations for the parenting of

many children can be seen as a function of population needs in much the same way that a contrasting situation existed in Mesopotamia. There, mythographic reinforcement of the acceptance of miscarriages, of infant (and adult) mortality, and of non-sexuality for women (Frymer–Kensky 1977: 149-50; Kilmer 1972: 171-72) arose from and aided adaptation to the problems of overpopulation.

In sum, the variables at work in the highlands of early Iron Age Palestine were such that strenuous efforts would have been required to meet the pioneer demands. A near balance of labor would have ensued. The labor division can likewise be suggested. Men's roles would have involved occasional militia duty, initial settlement tasks such as land-clearing and cistern digging, plow agriculture, and as many additional horticultural tasks as time and energy required. Women's roles included the maternal ones (probably to a heightened degree insofar as bearing many children was essential), domestic or household chores, and considerable contributions to the subsistence chores involved in tending trees, vines and gardens in contrast to the usual tendency for maximized female economic productivity to be accompanied by a reduced biological productivity. Thus, for at least a brief period of time, the female population of early Israel rose to the simultaneous demands of a high birth rate and a large role in the productive tasks.

Genesis 3: A Reconsideration

There is hardly a chapter in the biblical corpus the interpretation of which has been more rooted in traditional Judaeo-Christian interpretations than has the Eden episode. The centrality of the matter of sin, its origins and its meaning for humanity, has consistently figured prominently in discussions of the Garden narrative. This kind of interpretation, which can be traced at least as far back as the first century in the New Testament (Rom. 5.12-14) and in the various versions of the life of Adam and Eve, has tended to permeate all modern scholarly treatments of the narratives of Genesis 2 and 3.

To cite just one example, von Rad's treatment of Genesis 3 (1961: 83-99) is entitled 'The Story of the Fall'. This notion of a

fall is not found in the story itself but rather derives from Orphic thought, influential throughout the eastern Mediterranean world in late antiquity; Plato's *Phaedrus* is perhaps the best-known exposition of Orphic ideas (Hanson 1972: 41-42). Working from such a designation at the outset, von Rad's conclusion (p. 98) that Genesis 3 'asserts that all sorrow comes from sin' is nearly foregone. The assumption that Genesis 3 is about the origins of sin dominates nearly all treatments of primaeval history.

While the role of disobedience and its consequences clearly figure in the story of the first human pair, it is an oversimplification of a rich and powerful narrative to allow that theme to obliterate other, perhaps equally important features. For several reasons the focus upon sin and punishment may be a distortion caused by two millennia of traditional midrash and theology. A few of those reasons will be enumerated briefly here. Then I will present my own analysis of part of the Genesis 3 text. This analysis in my opinion constitutes additional evidence that, at the least, a variety of levels of meaning are operating in Genesis 3, and perhaps also that the centrality of the sin/punishment theme should be reconsidered.

First, there is no explicit reference to sin in the narrative (see Naidoff 1978: 2-3). None of the Hebrew words that refer to 'sin' are present in the text of either Genesis 2 or 3. It is not until Cain and Abel, the first naturally-born humans, are involved in the act of murder in Genesis 4, that sin (*ḥaṭṭā't*) comes knocking—or couching—at the door (4.7). This may be an argument from silence, but it may speak audibly when one holds it in juxtaposition with the fact that the Adam and Eve story essentially disappears thereafter. Adam and Eve are not mentioned in Genesis 4, when sin is introduced. Nor are they mentioned again in the Hebrew Bible despite the fact that the frequent prophetic concern with sin, judgment, punishment and banishment would provide many suitable instances in which the primaeval sin could be cogently cited.

Secondly, the strong aetiological flavor of the Eden story creates many problems for a systematic focus on the supposed cause–effect relationship between the sin and the punishment. The very fact that the serpent is held accountable along with the

people diminishes the truly human theme of obedience to God's word. Similarly, the act in question, eating of a taboo food source, seems insignificant. While this may in some ways provide emphasis for the concept of disobedience itself, it can in other ways make the causality seem weak so that the aetiological force dominates.

Thirdly, if the absence of the vocabulary of sin is to be taken seriously, then the nature of the lexical emphases that are present must also be noted. In particular, the use of the verb *'kl*, 'to eat', stands out, both by its frequency and also by the way in which it establishes structural correspondences (Walsh 1977; Trible 1978: 82-87, 128-32). Its repetition is striking and should tell us that the beginning of human existence coincides with a concern for food. In the Eden story the first verbal message directed towards the first human explains this food source. Original human consciousness and the need to know about one's food supply are interrelated. In the anthropological language that has been introduced above, the Eden story is a strong testimony to the essential human task of subsistence, particularly in a less than ideal ecosystem. 'Eating' is not simply or only a symbolic vehicle for the concept of disobedience. It is a central issue. One can sense the profound anxiety about life, about food necessary to sustain life, in the pivotal usage of *'kl*. What else would have been the central, daily, interminable concern of the Palestinian peasant?

A fourth reason for reconsidering the emphasis on sin as the major, if not only, meaning of the Eden narrative is related to this key motif of food, or subsistence, as a reflection of the life situation in ancient Israel. What genre is it that speaks to the realities, the difficulties in particular, of daily living and of accepting one's lot in life? The answer to this question appears in several recent scholarly works which have independently placed Genesis 3 within the context of wisdom literature. Almost without exception, literary critics have considered this chapter part of the J tradition of Pentateuchal literature. Yet even within the context of the Yahwistic source, it has been identified as a special and an individual type of a document, a one-of-a kind literary unit (Wright 1960: 24-25; von Rad 1961: 98). Recently, however, its wisdom background in terms of liter-

ary motifs and structures and also its existential concern has been convincingly recognized (Lieberman 1975: 153-70; Mendenhall 1974: 320-26; Scott 1965: xxii).

In terms of format, technique (vocabulary and use of puns and double entendres), setting, characterizations and even 'plot', Genesis 3 follows the form of a parable or, perhaps more accurately, a 'wisdom tale' (Lieberman 1975: 156-57). While it is fascinating to explore the formal and literary characteristics that place this chapter within the wisdom tradition, its thematic expression of problems of human existence is what makes it relevant to our investigation. In contradistinction to the pragmatic instructional kind of wisdom epitomized in Proverbs, the third chapter of Genesis and in particular its poetic addresses belong, like Job and Ecclesiastes and certain Psalms, to the speculative type of wisdom which deals with a questioning of the paradoxes and harsh realities of life.

As a *māšāl*, the story in Genesis 3 must be approached in terms of the real world in which it operated. The purpose of such a literary form was to address reality and help the audience accept an aspect of reality in a way that could not effectively be conveyed by more direct means (cf. Mendenhall 1974: 320). Understanding the social function of Genesis 3 as wisdom tale is thus central to interpreting its original message and focus. Unfortunately, this segment has been lifted from its literary and social context and hence has been subject to thousands of years of misinterpretation and consequently misuse. Scholarly exposition (e.g., Mendenhall 1974: 319-20) of this exploitation is justifiably irate and long overdue; from late biblical times to the present day, citation of Genesis 3, in particular v. 16, has been the authoritative glue sealing the document of divinely-ordained female subordination, if not inferiority.

Genesis 3.16 Analyzed

The function of God's address to woman within its Genesis 3 narrative context can be removed from the domination of the sin/disobedience theme only with consideration of this passage in its social setting, in awareness of its wisdom formulation, and with openness to the possibility that an exposition of primal sin

is not its only, and perhaps not even its major, function. Literary analysis has provided a major breakthrough in understanding the first half of Genesis 3 (Trible 1978: 72-105). Now sociological sensitivity must be added to the scholarly effort to recover the context, and hence the meaning, of this valuable portion of ancient Israel's intellectual tradition. A careful line-by-line treatment of the divine address to the woman in 3.16 is the most effective way to present here the lexical nuances of this biblical text.

3.16b	*har^{e}bâ 'ar^{e}beh 'iṣṣ^{e}bônēk w^{e}hērōnēk*
	b^{e}'eṣeb tēldî bānîm
3.16c	*w^{e}'el-'išēk t^{e}šûqātēk*
	w^{e}hû' yim^{e}šōl-bāk

3.16b	I will greatly increase your work and your pregnancies;
	(Along) with toil you shall give birth to children.
3.16c	To your man is your desire,
	And he shall predominate over you.

In the first half of the bicolon 3.16b, the verbal form consists of an infinitive absolute along with the verb. The use of the infinitive absolute before the verb has the effect of emphasizing or strengthening the verb (GKC, 122-23, 340). The absolute certainty of the occurrence of the verbal action is thus expressed. In this case, the simple notion of quantitative 'increase' in the verb alone is intensified, thus implying even greater quantity. That intensification is conveyed in English by the addition of an adverb, thus putting greater stress on the verb: 'greatly increase' (multiply).

The object of this verb is twofold. Although there has been a tendency to regard the two terms as a model example of hendiadys (Speiser 1964: 24), a lexical study of the first of the terms dictates against such an interpretation (Cassuto 1961: 165). *'iṣṣābôn*, 'work', derives from the root *'ṣb*. Three times does a form of this root appear in Genesis 3, twice in v. 16 (in the form just mentioned and in *'eṣeb* in the second part of 16b) and once in v. 17b in God's address to the man (*'iṣṣābôn* again).

In its usage in v. 17, 'work' clearly refers to the physical labor involved in the man's daily struggle to earn a livelihood. Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, the root is used consistently to

convey this same idea of hard work and in particular the unremitting work of one's hands necessary to achieve the bare necessities in life. For example, the etymological explanation of Noah's name in Gen. 5.29 plays upon the description of man's lot in Gen. 3.17-18, conveying the difficulty in eking out a living, expressed by 'what we do: the work (*'iṣṣ^{e}bôn*) of our hands'. Similarly another word derived from this root is used in Ps. 127.2 to link long hours of work with the procurement of the 'bread of labors (*^{a}ṣṣābîm*)'. Thus it is not only physical work that is involved but also the notion of unabating difficulty accompanying this toil.

This terminology, however, is nowhere associated with the description of childbirth. The Bible does preserve a vocabulary (Cassuto 1961: 165) associating the birth process with pain or suffering, but none of those words is present in this passage. As a matter of fact, it would hardly be appropriate to use a word for the pain or anguish of childbirth in this first part of v. 16b, even were an argument for hendiadys to be sustained, since the second object of this clause is 'pregnancy' or 'conception', not 'birth'. That is, even if pain were an appropriate description of the birth process, it is not an accurate or suitable description of pregnancy. Actually, unremitting toil would likewise be an inept way to describe either conception or gestation. Consequently, the possibility of seeing hendiadys in this instance can be eliminated.

To reiterate, the two objects of the verbal construct are independent concepts. On the one hand, the woman's productive work is mentioned and on the other hand reference is made to her procreative role. In both cases a substantial if not exponential increase is to take place. The female contribution to society is intensified as *both* the woman's contributive labor *and* her pregnancies are quantitatively increased. The translation offered above gives a plural in the latter case, although the Hebrew uses the singular. A collective plurality, however, is implicit in the verbal form, and a simple English plural seems to best convey that.

The second stich of v. 16b stands in parallelism with the first half-line. As part of a poetic insertion into the narrative sequence, this verse along with others in this section of

Genesis 3 exhibits many of the features associated with the metrical rhythm and internal structure of Hebrew poetry (Gray 1915: 216-17; Cassuto 1961: 72-73); the attribution of this passage to the wisdom tradition does not affect such a judgment (Eissfeldt 1965: 82-83).

Again, the root *'ṣb* is used, this time in the form *'eṣeb*, as noted above. It is introduced with the particle *b*, generally 'with' or 'in'. In this case *b* is comitative rather than instrumental. The force of the preposition is conveyed by the suggested translation '(along) with'. Just as pregnancy or conception in the first stich is presented as an entity separate from toil, the parallel member here deals with labor—again *not* the labor of the birth process but rather the labor of the subsistence realm—distinct from childbirth. 'Toil' is used to translate *'eṣeb* rather than the more frequently used 'labor' because the latter carries too much of the notion of parturition pains. The pain of labor may simultaneously be conveyed here, but not by a lexical choice that ties it specifically with childbirth.

The second portion of this member refers to the childbirth process itself, not to be identified with the event of conception or the period of gestation. The parallelism here is of the complementary rather than of the synonymous type (Freedman 1972: xxvii). Pregnancy and parturition together, along with the subsequent nurturing, constitute the reproductive function of women in society. The increase in performance of that function prescribed in the previous colon cannot be accompanied by a decrease in women's participation in the labor force, that is, in the subsistence sphere, to use terminology suitable to the agrarian framework of early Israel. The call for a rise in the birth rate does not obviate the expansion of woman's contributive role to production tasks.

The translation of v. 16c requires fewer corrections of previous lexical notions. However, the organic connection between the two parts of this line and the two separate but related concepts of the preceding line must be recognized. Both members of this bicolon are introduced by the conjunction *waw*, in what may be a somewhat unusual form of the construction normally formed with *gam...gam*; if this is so, the bicolon has not been properly understood. Were there a *waw* only between

the two members of this verse or only before the first, then the suggested translations must be justified which understand the second half to be consequent on the first or which take the whole line to contrast with or be consequent to the line before it. The variety and combination of particles found in translations—*but, and, since, yet, for*—reflect the ambiguity sensed by the translators.

This ambiguity is perhaps dispelled by seeing in the double *waw* construction a separating of the two members of the line, and a connecting of each of them to the separate concepts expressed in each of the parallel segments of the line above. In cumbersome English this arrangement would be expressed by something like 'on the one hand...and on the other hand' or better, 'in the first instance...and in the second instance'. Since such phrases would badly distort the poetic structure, simple 'and' best conveys the way in which the two parts of this line are distinct and are related to the two distinct ideas of the beginning of this verse.

The first stich of v. 16c picks up thematically on the second concept of 16b, so that there is chiastic relationship between the two lines. The use of *'îš* for man here is a gender-marked word, as demanded by the relational context of this member to the pregnancy and childbirth of the corresponding position of 16b. This does not necessarily limit the meaning, however, to sexuality, although that sort of sexual connotation is present in that conception and birth are clearly the desired outcome.

The use of *t'šûqâ*, which at first glance appears to support a sexual nuance, actually broadens sexuality into a depiction of a fuller female–male relationship. This word is found twice elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. In the Song of Songs, where the reciprocal nature of human love is the keynote (Trible 1973a: 42-47 and 1978: 144-65), *t'šûqâ* appears at the beginning (Gordis 1974: 70-71) of a song (Song 7.11-14) and refers to the man's 'desire' for the woman. The consequence of their mutual love-attraction is not simply a sexual meeting; it is spelled out in the following verses. The man and woman rise early, first to make their way through both field (normally the male's sphere of activity) and vineyard (more likely to be associated with the female's contribution in the division of labor) to check on the

crops; only then do they make love. Their desire for each other as stated at the outset of this song is fulfilled by their sharing in all agricultural tasks and also in sexual love. 'Desire' therefore is an attraction which includes sexuality but is not limited to that. The use of *t^{e}šûqâ* in Gen. 4.7, where it can hardly mean sexual urge but rather conveys the intensity and scope of sin's attraction, reaffirms the broader aspects of 'desire'. The strength of the woman's feeling for the man and also the extension of those feelings to include more than the sexuality needed for reproduction are conveyed in this half-line, thus elaborating upon the reproductive imperative of the preceding line. While somewhat awkward, 'to' is used, rather than the more customary 'for', to translate *l^{e}* before *'îš*; the nuance of '(directed) towards' seems more appropriate.

The last half-line to be considered here is perhaps the most difficult of all, since it has provided the locus for so many broad generalizations about the subservience of woman to man. Yet within the context of the literary structure of 3.16 as a whole and the description of the female role as it is now understood in the foregoing analysis, many of the difficulties—which are perhaps only emotional difficulties caused by the results of misinterpretation—fall away.

The man's relationship to the woman is herein described but it is not a general statement. This half-line comments on, or offers more information about, the first concept of the preceding line, the increase of female responsibilities in the realm of the toil and labor of an agrarian society. Just as the woman's attraction for the man, and thus her full involvement with the man, allows for the success of the second (reproductive) imperative, the increase in subsistence work in the first imperative can succeed because the woman will not bear that burden alone. As a matter of fact, in absolute terms the involvement in unremitting toil, in the *'iṣṣābôn* with which both man (Gen. 3.17) and woman have been charged, will not be more than what the woman can handle, given the portion of her energy needed for her other role, procreation. She will not have to carry too large a share of the work load; her man's contribution in that sphere, even allowing for her increased role, will still be greater.

The use of the verb *mšl* here bears out this understanding.

Unlike other words for dominion or authority used in the Bible, this root often refers to the unnatural exercise of the power or authority of one person or group over another person or group, or alternately to control attained with difficulty. Of the Davidides, *mšl* is only used of Solomon and Hezekiah, two wise men both of whom ruled territory not part of the Israelite inheritances. For Solomon, at least, this wordplay on Solomon's reputation as wise man and as source of 3000 parables or proverbs (1 Kgs 4.32) could not be resisted. Otherwise the divinely ordained rule of the Davidic house, or even of the northern kingdom, is rarely if ever expressed by *mšl*.

In other words, whatever the particular nature of the dominion in Gen. 3.16 may be, it does not come about by inherent right. It is a conditional, and sometimes a temporary, authority, and it often requires considerable effort to attain in that the object of the authority resists. This aspect of *mšl*, however, in which clear rule or dominion as in the political realm is conveyed, is not the only dimension of that word. Especially in wisdom sources, it can operate in a more figurative rather than in a technical sense, in which case the nuance is one of prevailing or overcoming or taking precedence. This can be found in Gen. 4.7, in the verse in which *t^{e}šûqâ*, 'desire', also appears, as well as in several other places specifically classified as wisdom literature (e.g., Prov. 16.32; 17.2; Qoh. 9.17).

The rendering given above, 'predominate', conveys the 'dominion' notion of the Hebrew and yet preserves the relative nature of the verb, unlike words such as 'rule' which tend to imply some sort of monarchic or legal control. Even more importantly, 'predominate' circumvents to some extent the whole power/authority connotation and allows for the specific context of this verse. In terms of the labor imperative, the woman will need to increase her contribution; but given the simultaneous fact of the procreation imperative, she will not be put into a position of doing more than her mate in the subsistence sphere. She may contribute nearly as much as he does, but his share will remain larger than hers. No matter what other demands there may be on his energies, they are not equivalent to the demands of pregnancy and childbirth, and hence he must provide more of the subsistence labor than does the female.

This explication of Gen. 3.16 has been rather extensive because it differs so fundamentally from the traditional, or even more recent, scholarly interpretations. Yet in each segment of this passage, the lexical analysis and poetic arrangements have mandated the translation proposed at the outset and the understanding of that translation put forth in the above discussion. It remains to set this text against the societal conditions to which it speaks and then to the larger issue of the female–male balance which is the overriding concern of this discussion.

Without entering into a detailed discussion of the address to the man in Gen. 3.17-19, a few comments about that passage and its information about the male role are in order. Enormous effort on the part of the male is depicted. Work and sweat, day in and day out, are entailed in order to produce a livelihood. The purpose of the unceasing labor is the harvest of field crops, cereals; the phrase *ʿēśeb haśśādeh*, 'grains of the fields', in v. 18 and the world *leḥem*, 'bread', in v. 19 both relate to the production of grains (Cassuto 1961: 169). If the vocabulary used to describe the male role conveys an image of constant and laborious toil, this notion is intensified in the image of the environment with which he must work. The soil is inhospitable in the extreme, suited only for thorns and thistles. It is indeed cursed, and a cursed land lacks rainfall and fertility: there will be no increase and yield when God makes the 'heavens like iron' and the 'earth like brass' (Lev. 26.19; cf. Deut. 28.23). Under such conditions only a greatly increased effort can provide a grain crop.

Gen. 3.16-19 addresses the situation faced by people living in the Levant and especially in the central hill country of Palestine as a territory isolated from the contiguous plains. Life under such conditions was more difficult and more fragile than in most other areas of agrarian existence in the Near East. This would have been especially true if normal concerns of daily existence were augmented with the need for performing additional subsistence tasks. The elementary questions about life and its hardships, about the endless and excessive efforts to survive, these are the human enigmas of existence to which this passage speaks. The gnawing *why*—why is life so hard for both men and

women, why is there so much to be done for survival alone?—is dealt with here (Davidson 1973: 43; von Rad 1961: 89).

This question is of the same order, though perhaps even more fundamental, than the question of Job and Ecclesiastes (Scott 1965: xx). The Bible answers this question with a parable or tale in much the way that other mythographic categories respond to the human predicament in other ancient cultures (Mendenhall 1974: 327). The answer turns out to be comparable, whether in the Bible or in pagan literature: the human condition is ordained by God and must be accepted as such. Compare some Akkadian wisdom texts, such as those from Ugarit, which were evidently well-remembered and often repeated (Khanjian 1974: 182, 187-90): each happy day is followed by many days of scarcity and evil; such was the plan of Ea in establishing the universe. Biblical wisdom does, however, include the dimension whereby the knowledge of this God who so ordained life can, in and of itself, remove the futility and emptiness of the situation. The unending tasks will not be alleviated but the possibility for happiness within that context exists when God's sovereignty is accepted. Although Genesis 3 itself does not deal directly with this, the two wisdom psalms (127 and 128) related to Genesis 3 make this ideological dimension explicit (see Dahood 1970: 224-27).

Because the actual Genesis description of the human condition does not present the positive possibilities involved in God's imperative, it has been repeatedly given an inherent connection with the disobedience of the primordial couple in the first part of the chapter. Yet there is a strong case to be made for the discreteness of the poetic section in vv. 14-19. It does indeed, on literary criteria alone, stand separate from the first half of the chapter. While it continues the characters and the setting of the Edenic scene, at the very least it is an Act 2 of the full drama (cf. Trible 1978: 123). The pronouncements themselves have an independent aetiological force (Bailey 1970: 149) that has been recognized even by those who adhere to the notion of a single framework for the entire chapter (Westermann 1974a: 98; von Rad 1961: 89). The prose framework contains its own punishment, expulsion from the Garden, in vv. 20-24. Thus God's poetic pronouncements, involving a curse for serpents and soil, and an establishment of life roles for man and woman,

are separate from the Edenic acts and are penalties only in terms of their aetiological inclusion in the prose framework (cf. Naidoff 1978: 10).

Furthermore, it may be that the only section of the poetic address that has not yet been considered here may contain an indirect presentation of the wisdom response in which human wisdom, beginning with the acknowledgment of God's control, provides the positive dimension to the human struggle for survival. The serpent in vv. 14-15 is deprived of its power. As a symbol of wisdom and/or fertility common in ancient Near Eastern cultures and persisting in the Israelite world (Hvidberg 1960: 207-80; Joines 1974), its status is completely reversed in the divine curse. Its previously superior position, crafty and able to speak and to influence, has been transformed into that of the lowliest and most despised creature. Implied in the reversal of the serpent's status is a total eclipse of its powers. The serpent is no longer a mediator or representative of wisdom. The powers it exhibited are now confined to the God–human continuum and are solely in the realm of human existence. If this is so, then wisdom is securely within the grasp of humankind and thus it becomes possible to give meaning to life's exigencies.

Genesis 3.16 and Earliest Israel

In general, then, the societal conditions to which Gen. 3.14-19 speaks are those which demand maximum output on the part of both men and women. The question as to whether this situation can be directly related to the earliest period of Israelite corporate existence described above cannot be evaded. Removing the Genesis 3 passage considered here from its supposed Yahwist context reopens the question of its original emergence into Israelite literary tradition. The matter of its specific date in the literary form in which it now appears probably cannot be resolved without further linguistic and poetic studies of the entire passage.

It can be argued that the life situation which evoked the Genesis 3 response was the situation which prevailed in Israel during the Iron I period. The settlement of Palestinian hill country was a one-time event demanding an output of human

energy that would have represented a significant increase over levels of male and female endeavor in preceding periods, whether among the serfs of the Canaanite city states or the pastoralists of the steppes or the Semitic survivors of Egyptian imperialism (the Moses or Exodus group). With the recognition that this passage speaks directly to that situation, calling for a multiplication of the female's contribution in the areas of subsistence and child-bearing, and for an unremitting dedication on the part of the male to the hardships of cereal agriculture, a premonarchic setting appears likely indeed. This is not to say that existence was not always difficult and that the 'whys' to which wisdom responded did not arise at other critical moments (Mendenhall 1974: 327-30). Rather, the early Iron Age stands out as the period in which the historical and environmental features provide the most suitable background for the blunt and inescapable imperative concerning the use of human energy that Gen. 3.16-19 contains. In the pioneer period of Israelite history, the demands for participation in basic societal tasks were critical in a way which perhaps was never quite duplicated. Never again would the need for a powerful and direct religious sanction of 'work ethic' for both males and females, and also for a high fertility rate, be so strong.

In terms of thematic content and also, to a lesser extent, in terms of language, the relationship of Genesis 3 to several poetic passages may lend support to an early context for the Genesis 3 poetic addresses. Psalm 127 as well as its companion piece Psalm 128 (Dahood 1970: 227), as has been pointed out, are wisdom psalms which together portray acknowledgment of God as the way for humanity to derive fulfillment from its constant toil. The three areas of human activity each appear—reproduction, subsistence and defense—and the persistence in carrying out each in the knowledge of God removes the futility from the struggle involved. The language of these psalms has an archaic quality and also a syntactic and lexical connection with Ugaritic texts that suggest that they belong to the Davidic stage of Israelite psalmody (cf. Dahood 1965: xxx).

Similarly, the Song of Hannah (1 Sam. 2.1-10) conveys the message of Yahweh's unlimited authority and wisdom in human affairs, regardless of what empirical observation may suggest,

that is, difficulties of life do not gainsay God's power or dominion. God's involvement with and interest in the struggles of human existence are portrayed in a series of reversals dealing with God's unexpected assistance in each of the three basic activities of human society: the battle is won, the barren conceive many, the impoverished receive bread. Thematically this song deals with the same questions as Genesis 3. It dates as a whole from the early monarchy; and precisely at the point where the reversals proclaim God's supreme wisdom and power in human affairs (vv. 1-5), it depends on the language of Psalm 113, which can be dated to the twelfth century (Freedman 1978: 65-66*).

Thus the life situation of the pre-monarchic period, and thematic and linguistic connections with certain early poems, present converging lines of evidence testifying to the connection of Gen. 3.14-19 with the early experience of Israel. Israel at its outset—and whether one dates Genesis 3 to within that period or not does not affect this conclusion—undertook a way of life which demanded the cooperation and participation of all members of society. Genesis 3 portrays this situation whether or not its final literary formulation derives from that moment. The life situation required a shift of energies such that women increased their procreative role and also made large contributions to the subsistence sphere.

Clearly the second conclusion reached above, regarding an intensification in the use of human energy in all areas of basic societal need, has been illuminated by this analysis of Genesis 3. That the female share in the division of labor nearly balances that of the male is indicated by the assurance that she will not in fact be on a par with him in her cultural, as opposed to her natural, contributions. His role in the non-domestic life activities is to be greater. Therefore, while a pair of individuals appears in which each member is working to ultimate capacity, the male share in the critical subsistence sphere is presented as larger.

This fits the conceptual model of a near equal division of labor. It also reflects part of the complex configuration of factors which ultimately leads to the lesser valuation placed on female modalities, a goodly portion of which are natural or biological

(having to do with child-bearing) as opposed to the fully cultural, and thus creative and potentially transcendent, functions of males in society (Ortner 1974). The greater valuation given males in the cultic and legal portions of the Pentateuch derives to some extent from this formulation. Yet the basic pattern here of increased female participation in food-producing tasks would nonetheless have created a relative increase in female status and power, as I have pointed out above. Genesis 3 presents only the cause of such increase, not the effects; the latter must be sought in other texts.

The specific types of contributions of male and female (that is, the gender roles) to societal survival in early Israel are partially reflected in Genesis 3. Pregnancies along with unspecified kinds of physical toil comprise the woman's portion. The social scientific perspectives I have presented, however, can provide specificity: horticultural and viticultural tasks would have been included in the spectrum of a woman's tasks. The man's labor is clearly specified in the reiteration of the unending efforts he must make so that the cursed earth will bring forth bread. The difficult but essential tasks of using plow agriculture for growing grain in the uplands is the man's lot.

While these basic conclusions can be reached concerning gender roles in earliest Israel, they represent only a broad, or rather a basic, kind of outline. One would hope to be able to take them further, to provide more nuanced delineations of male and female roles, responsibilities and interactions. For example, the relationship of man and woman to childbirth, that is, their relative parenting roles, should be pursued in a full study of gender roles. Similarly, the distinctions made between male and female with respect to behavior in the public domain must be examined. While such other aspects of sexual dimorphism need to be addressed, they remain secondary to the roles of male and female in the basic life activities. That is, the issues we have considered here will perhaps lay the groundwork for a more comprehensive treatment of sex roles in earliest Israel and also in subsequent periods of Israelite existence.

ARE WOMEN CURSED IN GENESIS 3.16?

Adrien Janis Bledstein

Criticizing Harold Bloom's treatment (1990) of the J narrator as a woman, R.E. Friedman—who in 1987 proposed that the gender of the J narrator is not obvious and that she might be a woman (pp. 85-86)—raises a significant issue for feminist interpretation of Scripture:

> If I were going to mount a full defense of the idea that this author was a woman, I would at least have come to terms with the fact that it is precisely in J that the deity imposes a curse on women that 'Your desire will be to your man, and he will rule over you' (Gen. 3.16; Friedman 1991: 50).

Does the Deity curse women in a decree that men should rule over them? Or, are we hearing reiteration of an ancient patriarchal misreading of a story conceivably told by a woman? I question whether the Hebrew necessarily supports translations which give rise to the commonly repeated assumption that woman must be ruled by man, and offer another possible reading.

A close look at the Hebrew in the context of the ancient Near Eastern literature reveals an alternative translation and understanding of Gen. 3.16. First, woman is not 'cursed'. After cursing the serpent for all generations, the Deity speaks to the woman, but neither 'curses' (in Hebrew the root is *'rr*) her nor the man. The term 'curse' is applied only to the serpent and to the earth. In a personal address to the woman, the Deity reminds her that she is a human being, not a goddess, in her capacity to procreate:

> Greatly will I increase your pain,
> With pain you will bear children (Gen. 3.16).

What might this mean in the cultural context of ancient Israel?

Divine emphasis on increasing pain for this particular woman distinguishes her from the goddess she hopes to become when she responds to the crafty serpent's tempting: 'you [plural] shall be as deities (*'ᵉlōhîm*), knowers of good and evil' (Gen. 3.15). Without pain, goddesses bear offspring after nine days of pregnancy in a Sumerian paradise myth. Sumerologist S.N. Kramer (1963: 149) invokes this myth to explain the creation, from the rib of man, of the woman who is later called Eve, 'the mother of all living'. The narrator may be punning on 'Lady of the Rib' and 'Lady of Life', two goddesses in the Sumerian myth. To an ancient audience, aware that goddesses give birth painlessly, increased pain might seem an appropriate punishment for this woman who aspires to be a goddess.

Secondly, the alleged 'desire' of woman for her man is parallel to sin's 'desire' for Cain in 4.7. *tᵉšûqâ* is the noun usually translated as 'desire', 'urge' or 'lust'. It appears only three times in the Bible (see also Song 7.11) and, like the Akkadian *kuzbu*, may mean 'desirable' or 'allure' instead of 'desire'. In conversations, Mayer Gruber suggested that the Akkadian term *kuzbu* may be a semantic equivalent for *tᵉšûqâ*; and Deborah Gordon Friedrich linked the term *kuzbu* to Hebrew in the name Cozbi, the alluring Moabitess slain in Numbers 25.

kuzbu is 'attractiveness, charm, sexual vigor', according to the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary. Gula, the Babylonian goddess of healing, feels (in a hymn) that she is 'adorned with sexuality (*kzb*)' (Lambert 1967: 125, line 140). When she goes in procession, 'charm (*kzb*) rains down' (p. 127, line 165) and she describes her lover Ninurta as 'charming, adorned with sexuality (*kzb*), filled with lustiness' (p. 123, line 96).

kuzbu is an attribute of a harlot, the hero, and the goddess of love in the Epic of Gilgamesh. The harlot's *kuzbu* drew Enkidu away from the animals. The love-priestess describes courtesans 'radiating sexual prowess (*kzb*)', and Gilgamesh's 'body filled with sexual glow (*kzb*)' (Gardner and Maier 1984: 81, 83, 79. For other parallels between Genesis 2–4 and Gilgamesh see Bledstein 1977). Contextual synonyms—*dumqu*, 'beauty', and *inbu*, 'fruit'—connoting erotic attractiveness describe Gilgamesh when divine Ishtar is aroused to the indiscretion of trying to

seduce the hero who rebuffs her. In the Epic of Gilgamesh eroticism is likened to athletic competition, courtesans 'force the great ones into their beds' with a power greater than man's (Gardner and Maier 1984: 81, 75-85). I suggest that when the serpent insinuates that the woman and man will be like deities, we may surmise that the words invoke, in an ancient audience or reader, knowledge of myths and legends of ancient Israel's neighbors whose gods and goddesses are lusty, fickle, competitive, hostile and at times lethal.

Thirdly, the Hebrew scroll MSS originally had no punctuation, no vowels, and often lacked spacing between words. Thus I suggest, instead of *lappetaḥ ḥaṭṭā't rôbēṣ*—'sin [feminine singular] lieth at the door' (AV), or 'sin is the demon at the door' (Speiser 1964)—we may read *l^{e}ppetaḥ ḥēṭ' tirbōṣ*, 'at an opening of sin [masculine singular] you will rest [second person singular future]'. This alteration, combined with 'sexual allure' for *t^{e}šûqâ*, leads to a new translation of both 3.16 and 4.7. Acknowledging the woman's charm, YHWH warns of consequences of becoming 'like deities':

> You are powerfully attractive to your husband,
> But he can rule over you (3.16).

And YHWH alerts Cain:

> At an opening of sin you will rest;
> it [sin] is powerfully attractive to you,
> but you can rule over it (4.17).

YHWH addresses the woman as a responsible agent, acknowledging what in those days was obvious about members of each gender, whether human or divine: her erotic allure is powerful. But beware, she is cautioned, her man has the capacity—not the license nor the authority—to dominate her. Cain is admonished that he is able to master his arousal toward sinful action. In this new translation, sin is presented not as a supernatural being but as a way one may go, an invigorating temptation the human has the potential to master.

Other translations (Speiser 1964; Fox 1983; New Jewish Version) indicate that man 'shall' or 'will' rule over woman, asserting that he has an obligation and authority to do so. The

same translators say Cain 'can' rule over sin, implying he has an ability to rule if he makes an effort. Sin, it would appear from these translations, is more unruly than woman.

In summary, the Divine neither curses women, nor decrees that women be subordinate to men. First the term 'curse' is not applied to woman. Secondly, woman's 'desire' does not throw her at the feet of a man, as we have been led to believe by previous translations and commentaries; instead, woman is cautioned about life outside Eden: her attractiveness may threaten the man, a fear documented in myths and legends from the ancient world. Thirdly, examination of the parallel constructions of 3.16 and 4.7, which shows that woman is to man as sin is to Cain, underscores a person's capacity to rule one's own urges, but does not authorize man to rule woman.

In saying, 'you are powerfully attractive to your husband, but he can rule over you' (3.16), the Deity describes the sad state of hostility and tension between the sexes which results, ironically, from human aspiration to be like gods and goddesses.

THE PATRIARCHAL STAMP OF SCRIPTURE: THE IMPLICATIONS OF STRUCTURALIST ANALYSES FOR FEMINIST HERMENEUTICS*

Pamela J. Milne

> First principles...are commonly defined by what they exclude: they are part of the binary opposition beloved of structuralism. Thus, for male-dominated society, man is the founding principle and woman is the excluded opposite of this; as long as such a distinction is tightly held in place the whole system can function effectively (Eagleton 1983).
>
> It all goes back, of course, to Adam and Eve—a story which shows, among other things, that if you make a woman out of a man, you are bound to get into trouble. In the life cycle of the Garden of Eden, the woman has been the deviant (Gilligan 1982).

It is widely recognized by those who are engaged in it, that feminist biblical scholarship is characterized by diversity, both of its exegetical methods and of its hermeneutical goals.[1] The most fundamental division, however, is between those scholars who wish to remain within the biblical tradition as committed Jews or Christians and those who think it is necessary to analyze and critique the tradition from outside. The vast majority of feminist biblical scholars have opted for the former position, although in recent years there seems to have been, in the part of some

* Reprinted from *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 5/1 (1989): 17-34. I would like to acknowledge my debt to Elizabeth Behrens and Michael Ricketts whose own interest and research in feminist hermeneutics provided me both the opportunity to begin this study and the necessary critical dialogue within which to develop it.

1. See, for example, the survey discussions in Sakenfeld 1982: 13-20; Tolbert 1983: 113-26; Schüssler Fiorenza 1983: 4-40.

Jewish and Christian feminist scholars a growing uneasiness with scriptural sources that has resulted in serious questioning of the notion of canon and the extent of biblical authority.[1]

Related to the question of the authority of Scripture for the feminist exegete is the question of exegetical strategies. For some, the principal problem is not the biblical text but patriarchal interpretation of it. For others, the problem extends to the text itself:

> it has become abundantly clear that the scriptures need liberation, not only from existing interpretations but also from the patriarchal bias of the texts themselves (Russell 1985: 11).

Russell's underlying assumption here, an assumption shared by many feminist exegetes, is that patriarchal bias is something from which the text can, with the insight of feminist scholarship, be liberated. Such an assumption seems essential for those wanting to remain both feminists and committed members of the faith community. Katherine Doob Sakenfeld has identified three major tactics used by feminist exegetes to accomplish this liberation. The first is to look at, or emphasize, positive texts about women that counteract the negative texts used against women in traditional patriarchal exegesis. The second is to look at how the biblical tradition as a whole offers a critique of all structures of oppression, including patriarchy. The third tactic is to look at texts about women to learn about women living in patriarchal societies both ancient and modern (Sakenfeld 1985: 56).

One of the major goals of such exegetical strategies, for feminist exegetes opting to stay within the biblical tradition, is

1. Letty Russell is one of several who have addressed the issue of authority. She begins by identifying the basic dilemma of Jews and Christians who wonder if they are to be faithful to the scriptures or to their own integrity. Her solution to the dilemma is to contrast the prevailing paradigm of authority as domination (or authority *over* community) with the feminist paradigm of authority *in* community. See Russell 1985: 137-46. Along with this paradigm shift there is a general consensus that a different canon within the canon is necessary. Some would go so far as to say that the Bible is to be accepted in essence but not *in toto*. See Trible 1985: 148-49.

to reform or rehabilitate the text and its interpretation. On the other hand, those who have stepped outside the faith tradition, while they would share the reformers' goal of exposing the patriarchal biases through feminist exegesis, would not agree that the text can be reclaimed from patriarchy. They would argue that the Bible cannot be recovered or remade into an adequate spiritual source for women.

The feminist movement in general seems to regard the efforts of feminist reformist exegetes with some skepticism. *The Woman's Bible* project led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton from 1895–98 was judged irrelevant by some feminists of the day (Bass 1982: 11). The situation seems little different now. A review of contemporary feminist literature indicates that recent feminist biblical scholarship, especially reformist scholarship, has had almost no place therein. Letty Russell concludes that feminist biblical scholars are marginal to a great deal of feminist scholarship because they continue to uphold the value of biblical materials in spite of their patriarchal bias against women (1985: 14). This seems to reflect rather well the position of feminist scholar Gerda Lerner. In her provocative book, *The Creation of Patriarchy*, Lerner cites biblical scholars such as Phyllis Trible, Phyllis Bird and John Otwell who, she says, have 'tried to balance the overwhelming evidence of patriarchal domination by citing examples of a few female heroic figures or women who take independent action of one sort or another'. Lerner is clearly unimpressed by these examples. In her view, the existence of a few countercultural examples is not sufficient evidence upon which to assert that women had either a high status or a status equal to men in the biblical tradition (Lerner 1986: 176-77). One gets the impression that Lerner regards the optimism of these biblical exegetes as so much wishful thinking.

In this article I wish to raise the question, not of the *relevance* of reformist feminist biblical scholarship, but rather of its *viability*. The impetus for this questioning has arisen out of my work with structuralism and, more specifically, with the application of structuralist methodologies to biblical texts. It seems to me that some structural analyses have serious implications for the viability of reformist feminist hermeneutics and that these implications need to be identified and examined.

The work of structuralist biblical exegetes has led me to reflect on the distinction between reformist and nonreformist approaches to feminist biblical scholarship in terms of Beverly Wildung Harrison's distinction between 'hard' and 'soft' feminism.[1] Soft feminism regards the problem of sexism primarily as one of attitudes and opinions which can be changed through education and persuasion. Hard feminism regards such a view as interpretive illusion. For hard feminism, the problem of sexism is to be located in the very structures of our society. Translated to the realm of biblical studies we might ask whether the sexism of the Bible and its interpretation is a matter of superficial patriarchal bias or whether it is integral to the very structure of the biblical tradition.

Genesis 2.4b–3.24

I will focus this inquiry on the text of Gen. 2.4b–3.24 and its interpretation. This text is a particularly appropriate one for three reasons. Perhaps the most important reason for using Genesis 2–3 as an example text is that it has so frequently been used as the foundation for patriarchal theologies, especially patriarchal Christian theologies, of women.

The Hebrew biblical tradition virtually ignored this text. Unlike the exodus tradition which was used and reused in Deuteronomy, in the prophets and in the psalms, the Yahwist story of beginnings remained relatively dormant.[2] The situation began to change, however, in the intertestamental period when the Adam-Eve story reappeared and was greatly developed in apocryphal and pseudepigraphal materials such as Baruch, Sirach, the *Apocalypse of Enoch*, the book of *Jubilees*, the *Testament of Reuben*, and the *Book of Adam and Eve*. This development was characterized by the idealizing of Adam and the condemning of Eve as the source or occasion of evil.[3]

1. Carter Heyward discusses this distinction (1984: 225).

2. Only texts like Deut. 4.32, 1 Chron. 1.1, and Job 31.33 might reflect this story.

3. A useful discussion of this literature is to be found in Prusak 1974: 89-116.

The patriarchal interpretations of the story continued in the New Testament in passages such as 2 Cor. 11.3, 1 Tim. 2.9-15 and 1 Pet. 3.1-7, but took on an an even greater importance in the period of the early church fathers. It was here that the theology of woman as evil and as source of evil, and of woman as secondary and inferior began to take shape in a significant way.[1] It is this interpretation of the text that became normative and can be found in various forms in the writings of Philo, Augustine, Aquinas, in the *Malleus Maleficarum*, in the works of Luther, Calvin, Knox, in papal encyclicals through the past century, and so on. Indeed, Genesis 2–3 remains the major prooftext for those who believe that women are, by divine design, inferior to men and that, therefore, they ought to be kept properly subordinate to men.[2]

Feminist Interpretations

Genesis 2–3 is a text whose patriarchal interpretations have had significant and far-reaching negative consequences for ordinary women. It is not surprising, therefore, that it became the focus of the earliest feminist exegesis. In 1973 Phyllis Trible published two articles in which she exposed the patriarchal bias of past exegesis (1973a: 39-42; 1973b: 251-58).[3] She argued that Genesis 2–3, itself, actually breaks with patriarchy and that, therefore, this text, once reread from a feminist viewpoint, can be recovered and appropriated by women. 'Rather than

1. J.A. Phillips has argued that the church fathers drew upon three sources for their interpretations of Genesis 3: the intertestamental literature, the New Testament and the story of Pandora. The last was read as a completion of, or commentary on, the biblical story, so much so that the two accounts of the first woman became one. See Phillips 1984: 16-23.

2. Susan Brooks-Thistlethwaite has pointed out the importance of this text for many women with strong religious backgrounds who are victims of abuse: 'Abused women...believe what they have been taught the Bible says about their situations: that women are inferior in status before their husbands and God and deserving of a life of pain. One woman said "God punished women more"' (1985: 99).

3. These, of course, are not the first challenges to the traditional patriarchal readings of the text. *The Woman's Bible* offers a critique, as does Walter Brueggemann (1970: 541-42).

legitimating the patriarchal culture from which it comes, the myth places that culture under judgment. And thus it functions to liberate, not to enslave' (Trible 1973b: 258).

Trible returned to this text again in 1978 when she published a much-expanded version of her earlier work. She remained convinced, however, that the root of the problem lies in the 'centuries of misogynist reading' and not in the biblical text (Trible 1978: 72-143).

Phyllis Bird examined this text in a 1974 article. Although she seems to concede the existence of male-dominated language and structures in the Old Testament, she, too, locates the primary problem in the misinterpretation of the story rather than in the story itself. Similarly, Jean Higgins worked to salvage the story for women by exposing the lack of textual foundation in Gen. 3.6b for the often repeated claim that Eve 'tempted' Adam (Bird 1974: 73-77; Higgins 1976: 639-47).

These few examples indicate the importance of the Eve-Adam story within feminist exegesis and hermeneutics. This importance is the second reason for using Genesis 2–3 as an example on which to focus our questioning of the viability of the feminist reformist enterprise. It is not an exaggeration to say that the analysis and interpretation of Genesis 2–3 have been major elements in feminist biblical scholarship over the past fifteen years. The results of this biblical scholarship have, in turn, been significant for feminist theology, especially as it has addressed the sexism of contemporary religious teaching and praxis.

Structuralism

The third reason for choosing Genesis 2–3 as an example text is that it has been of particular interest to structuralists as well as to feminists. Structuralist studies of biblical texts began to appear about the same time as the first feminist theology and exegesis. Structuralism had its main point of departure in the work of Ferdinand de Saussure in the early 1900s and had influenced disciplines such as linguistics and anthropology by the 1950s. But the first application of a structuralist method to a biblical text occurred only in 1962 when British anthropologist Sir Edmund Leach published his famous essay 'Genesis as

Myth'.[1] Leach's study drew sharp criticism from many biblical scholars for its ignorance of biblical scholarship but it did set off a new interest in applying structural approaches to the Bible.[2] The stories in the opening chapters of Genesis have been of particular interest to structuralists because they come the closest to being 'myth' of any biblical material.[3] It was Claude Lévi-Strauss's essay, 'The Structural Study of Myth', which influenced Leach and which has become the main point of reference for biblical structuralists using his approach.[4] I will, therefore, focus on the work of Lévi-Strauss and the adaptation of his ideas to the analysis of Genesis 2–3.

Structuralism is not, in itself, a methodology but rather a way of thinking about the world or a point of view.[5] As such, it is essentially independent of subject matter. Rather, it searches out the patterns in any human production. Underlying the structuralism of Claude Lévi-Strauss is an assumption that the human mind is structured and is, therefore, a structuring agent which structures that which it produces.[6] This process of shaping or structuring is, however, a two-way street: humans, having

1. Reprinted in Leach 1971: 7-23. This article was a revision of Leach 1961: 386-96.

2. See, for example, Rogerson 1970: 490-500; and Culley 1972: 129-42.

3. While biblical scholars have generally used the term 'myth' in a fairly limited way, Leach applied the term to the entire Bible, Old Testament and New (King James Version!): 'All stories which occur in the Bible are myths for the devout Christian...' See Leach 1971: 7.

4. A revised edition of this paper is published in Lévi-Strauss 1963a: I, ch. 11. David Jobling has recently pointed out the problems which have arisen from what he describes as the 'absurd emphasis' on this one article by Lévi-Strauss (1986: 11). It might also be noted here that Lévi-Strauss, himself, did not think the Bible was a suitable object of analysis for his structural method (1963a: 631-32).

5. See Hawkes 1977: 17; Scholes 1974: 4; Jobling 1974: 139.

6. For a discussion of this point see Leach 1974: 25-26. It should be noted that not all structuralists work with this assumption. Literary structuralists are concerned with the text alone and not the mind of the author. However, many literary structuralists emphasize the 'constructedness' of human meaning (see Eagleton 1983: 103-108). As shall become apparent below, the 'mind' assumed to be structuring the *analysis* should be of interest to feminists reading any structuralist study.

shaped their world, are in turn shaped by it (Hawkes 1977: 14). Thus, for structuralists, a wholly objective perception of an individual entity is impossible. Every perceiver of an object perceives with a bias that affects that which is perceived in some way. On this point structuralists and feminists would seem to agree.

The act of perceiving creates a relationship between the observer and that which is observed and, for the structuralist, the 'true nature of things' lies not in the things themselves but in the relationships the perceiver constructs (Hawkes 1977: 14). The focus of the structuralist way of thinking or of viewing the world is, therefore, upon these relationships. Structuralists investigate the system of relationships among the parts of a whole and between the parts and the whole. Because the structures are relationships, they cannot be observed directly but must be abstracted from the objects of analysis.

The structural model used by Lévi-Strauss in his anthropological studies incorporated several concepts from structural linguistics. The most important of these, for the present discussion, was Roman Jakobson's notion of binary oppositions. Jakobson thought that binary oppositions were the most fundamental relationships in language. He argues that any sound unit is based upon a system of differences which are binary in nature (e.g., hard [p] versus soft [f]; high frequency [t] versus low frequency [p]). Such binary oppositions can be mediated by an intermediate term (e.g., [k] is mid-frequency sound that mediates between [t] and [p]). Structuralists indebted to Lévi-Strauss

> have generally followed Jakobson and taken the binary opposition as a fundamental operation of the human mind basic to the production of meaning... Its methodological primacy would alone indicate its place as a fundamental operation of human thought and thus of human semiotic systems (Culler 1975: 15).

Structural Exegesis of Genesis 2–3

With this brief introduction to some of the basic concepts of structuralism it is now possible to look at a few of the structural analyses of Genesis 2–3. I will focus on how these analyses

identify and describe the relationships in the story's structure involving the woman. Leach's article offers a good starting point since it represents the first structural analysis of a biblical narrative.

For Leach the Garden of Eden story is myth, one of three versions of the same myth that occur in Genesis 1–4. These three versions have analogous structures. One of the most notable characteristics of mythical stories for Leach is their 'binary aspect: myth is constantly setting up opposing categories'. This binary aspect does not represent random chance; rather, 'binary oppositions are intrinsic to the process of human thought' (Leach 1971: 8-9). To illustrate this intrinsic process of describing the world in binary categories, Leach notes that an object is either 'alive or not alive' and that human beings are either 'male or not male'. Religion is preoccupied with the first opposition and seeks to deny the binary link between life and death by creating the 'mystical idea of another world' where the dead live. The paradox or problem for religion is to bridge the gap between this world and the other world and thus to mediate the opposition of life and death.

Human society is preoccupied with the second opposition. Every society regulated the sexual relations of males to 'not males' with rules of incest and exogamy so that

> for any particular male individual all women are divided by at least one binary distinction, there are women of *our kind* with whom sex relations would be incestuous and there are women of the *other kind* with whom sex relations are allowed (Leach 1971: 10).

The paradox for society is to resolve the problem of human beginnings. If the first parents were of the same *kind*, then their sexual relations were incestuous, but if they were of *different kinds*, then what was the *other kind*? Myth must mediate this fundamental opposition. According to Leach, mediation is accomplished

> by introducing a third category which is 'abnormal' or 'anomalous' in terms of ordinary 'rational' categories. Thus myths are full of fabulous monsters, incarnate gods, virgin mothers. This middle ground is abnormal, non-natural, holy (Leach 1971: 11).

From this introduction to his analysis of Genesis, one suspects that the 'human mind' behind the structures Leach is about to identify is not generic. A human mind which structures the world into 'male and not male' seems to be one with a fairly strong male bias. Leach gives no indication that he recognizes the possibility of any gender bias in such a structuring. How, then, according to Leach, has the 'human mind' structured the myth in Genesis 2–3 with respect to this problem of original sex relations? He claims that one of the fundamental oppositions in this story is that of Man versus Garden.[1] Man is alone in the Garden but lonely. Other living creatures, cattle, birds and beasts, are created for Man but none overcomes his loneliness. This only occurs when Eve is drawn from Adam's rib. In Genesis 2, therefore, Eve mediates the opposition of Man versus Animal:

> Eve in the second story replaces the 'Creeping Things' of the first story. Just as Creeping Things were anomalous with respect to Fish, Fowl, Cattle and Beast so Eve is anomalous to the opposition of Man versus Animal (Leach 1971: 14).

In Genesis 3 the opposition becomes Man versus Woman and this opposition is mediated by the serpent which is a creeping thing, anomalous to man and woman.

It appears that, for Leach, Eve in Genesis 2 belongs to a paradigmatic set of anomalous (abnormal) mediating categories in Genesis 1–3 that includes creeping things in general and a specific creeping thing, the serpent. She does not fully belong to the rational category, Man, nor to the rational category, Animal but to the 'confused' category of mediator (Leach 1971: 20).

Leach's work predates the beginning of the current phase in feminist exegesis and, thus, could not have been influenced by any of its feminist insights. For that reason one might be less critical of his structuralist perception of woman in this 'myth'. One might have reason to expect significantly different structural descriptions from more recent analyses whose authors have had available many feminist exegesis of this text. In 1980, *Semeia* 18 was devoted entirely to structural readings of

1. Leach assumes, of course, that *'dm* is male from the very beginning of the story. This assumption, which characterizes most analyses of Genesis 2, was later challenged by Trible. I shall return to this issue later.

Genesis 2–3, and therefore provides an opportunity to test out this expectation.

The studies in *Semeia* 18 vary greatly in methodology, to the point that some of them are not at all related to the Lévi-Strauss-inspired structural approach outlined above. It is striking, however, that none makes reference to the works of Trible or other feminist analysts of Genesis 2–3. Furthermore, only the article by Robert Culley, which is not methodologically based on the Lévi-Straussian approach, seems to exhibit sensitivity to some of the feminist issues arising from the text.[1]

In their article, Daniel Patte and Judson Parker examine the system of deep values in the biblical story using an approach based on the work of A.J. Greimas. 'Deep values' are 'the elements of the vision of life and of the world held as self evident or revealed by the author or redactor' (Patte and Parker 1980: 55-56). The authors begin by identifying two narrative levels in the text, each of which has its own system of deep values. The primary level is found in Gen. 2.4-15 and 3.22-24. The set of deep values that undergirds this level is a series of presuppositions related to the power to create. For example, the deity has the power to create human life and vegetal life while Adam has the power to make *'ᵃdāmâ* fertile. The woman does not appear in the primary level and thus no power to create is associated with her (Patte and Parker 1980: 57, 64-68).

The secondary narrative level is found in Gen. 2.16–3.21 where the woman does appear. The set of deep values in this level endorses a 'proper relational view of human existence and denounces as wrong various monolithic views of human existence'. The existence of human beings is characterized by freedom of choice but this freedom is 'strictly limited by their nature which involves that they are dominated'. Each is

1. Culley 1980: 25-33. For example, Culley refers to Eve as 'partner' rather than 'helper' or 'helpmate'. By contrast, other articles accept without question, and without recognition of the challenges raised by Trible and others, many of the traditional assumptions about the text. These include the following: that *'dm* is male from the beginning of the story and that the word is a proper male name; that *'šš̌h* in Gen. 2.23 is a name given by 'Adam' to his newly created 'helper'; and that in Gen. 3 the woman distorts the prohibition given by YHWH to 'Adam'.

dominated according to his or her nature. Man is 'dominated by the *'ᵃdāmâ* from which he has been taken' while 'woman is dominated by the man from which she has been taken'. According to Patte and Parker, the wrong view of human existence, to which the text attaches a negative value, is being like the gods, which means 'transcending one's origin' or 'transcending one's nature as a living creature'. 'Human life is (exists as such) if, and only if, human beings maintain their proper relationship inside their own realm' (Patte and Parker 1980: 74).

Hugh White's analysis seems to suggest a similar idea at the level of discourse. The silence of woman before the fall suggests to him that 'she is man's possession, united with his flesh, and shaped subjectively by the prohibition given not to her but to him' (White 1980: 96).

In his article, Thomas Boomershine looks at the actantial roles of the characters in Genesis 2–3.[1] In Gen. 2.18-25 the woman, along with the animals, fills the role of receiver who is named (object) by the man (sender). But in the overall program of this section the woman is in the role of helper to man who is the subject. Her role changes in Gen. 3.1-7 where she becomes the sender of the fruit (object) to the man (receiver). But in Gen. 3.14-24 the curses 'reestablish the actantial relationship that existed before the violation of the mandate'. In this section the woman has the helper role 'imposed' on her (Boomershine 1980: 122-25).

At the end of this article Boomershine notes that he has used a different route to reach a conclusion similar to that of Jerome T. Walsh. Walsh used rhetorical criticism, the same method used by Trible, to reach a conclusion about human relationships virtually diametrically opposed to Trible's. For Walsh, the chiastic rhetorical structure[2] of Genesis 2–3 serves to emphasize the

1. This terminology comes from the work of A.J. Greimas. Greimas's actantial model is a model of narrative roles. An *actant* is a structural unit that remains constant while characters vary from narrative to narrative. For a discussion, see Calloud 1976: 19-21 and Patte 1976b: 41-43.

2. Chiasmus is a technical term used in rhetorical criticism to refer to a series and its inversion taken as a unit. See Watson 1986: 201. Ring composition is another term sometimes used to identify this textual surface structure pattern.

goodness or properness of hierarchical social relationships. The proper hierarchy, in Walsh's view, is God/man/woman/animals. This order, which is established in Genesis 2, is reversed (perverted) in Gen. 3.6-8. The perverted order (woman/ man/God) is identified with sin. The story ends with the intended order of creation restored in Gen. 3.14-21: 'Man's superiority over the woman is explicitly stated in the woman's punishment—"he shall have dominion over you"—and visible in the act of naming' (Walsh 1977: 1975).[1]

The article in *Semeia* 18 that makes the most important contribution and offers the greatest challenge to the issue at hand is David Jobling's, 'The Myth Semantics of Genesis 2.4b–3.24'. Jobling reaches the conclusion that the text is 'male mythology, striving to deal with the complexity of social life, and in particular with women' (1980: 48). The importance of this conclusion is that it raises the distinct possibility that this biblical text is not presenting a universal perspective but only the perspective of one half, the male half, of biblical Israel. Jobling has not assumed, as Lévi-Strauss and Leach apparently did, that all human minds structure in the same way or produce the same kind of structures. We will not examine this article directly because Jobling has published a revision of it in which he has 'refined and redefined' his position somewhat (Jobling 1986a: 17-43).

What makes Jobling's revised study so significant is that it is the first of which I am aware that seeks to undertake a structural analysis of Genesis 2–3 'in the context of feminist exegesis' and directly addresses some of the points raised in Trible's analyses of the text. Although sympathetic to Trible's aims, Jobling disagrees both with her approach to the text and with a number of specific claims in her analysis. Jobling is bothered by Trible's apparent inconsistency of approach. For

1. Trible identifies Gen. 3.2 as the rhetorical center of the text. Here the woman acts as theologian. According to Trible, the hierarchical social relationships which obtain at the end of the story represent the tragic consequences of disobedience, not the divine ideal (Trible 1978: 108-10, 132-39).

stories such as Ruth she finds that it is a man's world in which the story is set. But for Genesis 2–3 she does not concede that it is the same man's world. To the contrary, Trible sees this text as one which portrays the inequality between the sexes as the tragic result of the fall, while the ideal equality is represented in the creation account. Jobling asks who, in such a patriarchal culture as that from which the Bible arises, would have composed this kind of 'feminist story' and how could it have been received? This is question that Trible neither raises nor answers. Jobling also rejects Trible's interpretation of *'dm* as a sexually undifferentiated 'earth-creature' prior to Gen. 2.23. Although logic is certainly on Trible's side (maleness is meaningless before sexual differentiation), the text, according to Jobling, affirms 'the originality of maleness over femaleness...against logic'. He asserts that 'it is surely clear that the primal human is perceived as male' and cites reasons for this assertion (Jobling 1986a: 41-42).

Despite the fact that Jobling thinks his conclusions diverge completely from those of Trible, he does maintain that his structural analysis has important potential for furthering the feminist program (Jobling 1986a: 19). It is this claim that I particularly wish to examine in the remainder of this article.

There are two major sections of Jobling's analysis. In the first section he carries out a narrative analysis in which he argues that the model which dominates the story in Genesis 2–3 is not that of 'creation and fall' but rather that of 'a man to till the earth'. He argues for this alternate model because the usual creation/fall model cannot account for two of the main features of the text: the narrative function of Gen. 2.18-25 and the spatial distinction between the garden and the earth as a whole.

Gen. 2.18-25 (the creation of woman) is a problem for the creation/fall model because it seems to be part of the creation sequence yet, because it follows the prohibition in vv. 16-17, is indispensable to the fall sequence. Since the creation of the woman follows the prohibition, the text is stressing that it is only man's fate which is at stake: the woman and the snake are essential actors in the working out of the man's fate but the focus is on the man.

The garden is a problem because it disrupts the creation

sequence. Creation is supposedly about the making of the heavens and earth, yet most of the activity takes place inside the garden. Furthermore, the expulsion from the garden is not included among the list of punishments but occurs anticlimactically to it (Jobling 1986a: 21-22).

The narrative model of 'a man to till the earth' accounts better for the problems set out at the beginning of the story (v. 5). There is no vegetation, no rain and no man to till the ground. The provision of rain in v. 6 and the creation of man in v. 7 provide the conditions for vegetation. Yahweh plants the garden in vv. 8-9. But the initial lacks are only resolved in terms of the garden, not the whole earth. The resolution for the whole earth does not occur until the man is expelled from the garden. Jobling notes that we expect the woman to be mentioned in the expulsion order but she is not, and this 'confirms the link to the initial situation in which the man is alone' (Jobling 1986a: 23). The man is, therefore, the actantial subject of the main narrative program. The other Greimassian roles are more ambiguously invested. At first sight it seems that the woman and the serpent fill the role of helper in getting the man to till the earth. But the fact that the man is so passive and that the responsibility for this counteraction lies more with the serpent and the woman leads Jobling to suggest tentatively that the man, woman and serpent all fill the role of subject. If there is a helper it might be the serpent's cunning. It should be noted that this role identification differs from that proposed in other structural analyses examined.

Jobling concedes that, although the main narrative program is 'a man to till the earth', this program has been upstaged by the theological theme of the fall, so much so that 'no one senses that the text is about enabling vegetation by finding a gardener!' So, although 'a man to till the earth' is the main narrative program that unifies the text, it remains a subordinate theme while 'the fall' is the dominant theme but only a secondary narrative program. The 'fall' resembles a typical myth of transformation while 'a man to till the earth' has the form of a folktale, according to Jobling.

From the narrative analysis Jobling moves to the semantic analysis of the narrative model 'a man to till the earth'. Here he

finds two opposed '"logics" of human existence': the logic of 'inside' versus the logic of 'outside' the garden. In his discussion of the semantic configuration of the isotopy (i.e., a broadly defined semantic category or code) of society and sexuality, Jobling argues that inside the garden humanity is a solitary male, born autochthonously and immortal, while outside the garden humanity is two sexes, born sexually and mortal (Jobling 1986a: 26-27, 29):

> 'Inside', woman does not exist—the solitary 'earth-creature' is male... 'Outside', she shares the hardness of life, indeed has more than her share of it. But the hardness is defined for her wholly in terms of her sexual/generative function; it includes being subordinated to the will of the man (Jobling 1986a: 30).

Furthermore, Jobling notes that the link between the woman and the animals is strong throughout the text. The narrative analysis revealed that woman first appears in the same category as the animals as a potential helper for the man. The man's naming of the woman as he names the animals and the repetition of the sequence man, woman, serpent suggests to Jobling that 'woman' in the text is 'a mediating category between "man" and "animals"'. Here Jobling is in agreement with Leach who, as we saw above, identified woman as the anomalous other that mediated the binary opposition of man and animals. Jobling regards the setting of '"man" over against "woman and animals"' as one of the dynamics of the text (Jobling 1986a: 31).

In the narrative model of the fall the opposed logics are 'before' and 'after'. Here Genesis 2–3 appears as a typical myth of transformation from 'other world' to 'this world', which sets up such oppositions as 'male only' versus 'male and female'. The kind of cultural mindset that thinks this kind of opposition is one whose assumptions are male-centered ('patriarchal...even misogynistic') according to Jobling (1986a: 32). But this is ground that the myth cannot hold, for the more the myth distinguishes between the opposed logics of 'before/other world' and 'after/this world', the more difficult it is to explain how the former gave way to the latter. Thus there is a need for a 'middle semantics' which mediates the two semantic configurations.

In the isotopy of society and sexuality of this middle semantics woman represents the possibility of the 'after' in the 'before' and thus she precipitates the transformation from 'before' to 'after'. However, in the 'after' situation the woman 'suffers subordination to the man'. To make this appear logical she must be made to do something in the 'before' situation which is worse than what the man does. The 'worse' thing she does, according to Jobling, is to instigate man's disobedience. The introduction of the animals, especially the serpent, blunts the sharp juxtaposition of the 'before' and 'after' views of the woman. But it also reinforces the woman as mediating category between the man and the animals:

> She fluctuates between greater closeness to the man, which increases for the purpose of the 'middle' semantics, the semblance of human unity, and greater closeness to the animals, which stresses that she and they belong to the semantics 'after' (Jobling 1986a: 35-36).

The mythic theme of the fall has been used by the patriarchal mindset to posit that sexual differentiation, though bringing mutual joy, causes much complexity and pain. It has also been used to shift guilt or fault for the fall away from God (since the idea that God is ultimately responsible for evil is intolerable) and away from man (since it is no less intolerable for the male mindset that all the guilt should pass to man). It is the woman and the animals who assume the guilt in this myth. Thus, Jobling concludes, the fall theme serves 'a magnificent obfuscation of the guilt for the fall' but actually explains nothing. But this mythic universe is unreal and so there is a tension between the two narrative programs within the text. The folktale about 'a man to till the earth' undermines the myth of the 'fall' but fails to replace it. 'Superficially, the dream has won out' (Jobling 1986a: 38-40). It seems to be in this tension (rather than in apparently positive surface features) that Jobling finds the possibility for a feminist reading of the text. For Jobling Genesis 2–3 exhibits 'the effects of the patriarchal mindset tying itself in knots trying to account for woman and femaleness in a way which *both* makes sense *and* supports patriarchal assumptions' (1986a: 43).

Rather than choosing between rejecting the Bible as wholly

patriarchal and denying that the Bible is wholly patriarchal, Jobling suggests a third option for feminists: the acceptance of the Bible as wholly patriarchal but as wholly an effort of a bad conscience to make sense of patriarchy. This approach permits the effective use of deconstruction to demonstrate that the logic of oppression fails to make sense, that binary oppositions can only be 'established' if they are assumed in advance (Jobling 1986a: 43, 13).

Assessments

The implications of Jobling's work are, I believe, significant for feminist hermeneutics. Most important is his conclusion that Genesis 2–3 is male mythology and that the Bible is *everywhere* patriarchal. This, it would seem, represents a direct challenge to those reformist feminist exegetes who want to restrict sexism to the interpretation of the text. Jobling's work, along with the other structural analyses that are not conscious of the feminist concerns about this text, has the effect of forcing us to confront the possibility that the problem lies in the deep structures of the texts themselves. Deep structures are not altered by 'rereading' or reinterpreting the surface details of a narrative.

Structural analyses have produced results that lend strong support to the views of those feminists who think that the biblical text cannot be rehabilitated as a spiritual resource for women. The kind of deconstructionist feminist analysis proposed by Jobling, even if it reveals tensions at the deep level, does not produce comforting results for Jewish or Christian feminists. His 'third option' is an attractive and necessary one academically since feminist scholars cannot afford to reject analysis of a document that has so profoundly shaped the Western world. However, it is not an option which results in, or establishes the possibility of, the rehabilitation or reformation of the Bible as a nonsexist spiritual resource.

The work of Esther Fuchs illustrates the point quite clearly. Although her approach differs in many ways from Jobling's, it represents the best example to date of the kind of literary deconstructionist tactic he envisions. Fuchs reveals the patriarchal bias of biblical texts by, for example, undertaking to show

how the structure and order of type-scenes 'can be decoded as patriarchal strategies' (Fuchs 1987: 7-13). It is significant, however, that she makes no attempt to rehabilitate the text. Fuchs, I believe, has been especially perceptive in recognizing this limitation of a literary deconstructionist approach to the analysis of biblical texts.

Feminists seem to be finding post-structuralist approaches in a variety of disciplines more useful than structuralist approaches for providing a framework for understanding women's oppression. Fuchs's and Jobling's use of deconstructionist methods for feminist analyses of biblical texts seems to reflect the general situation. However, the deconstruction of the biblical text cannot, it would seem, be expected to produce the same kind of results as feminist post-structuralist analysis in other areas. The fundamental goal of feminist post-structuralism is change:

> Feminist post-structuralism, then, is a mode of knowledge production which uses post-structuralist theories of language, subjectivity, social processes and institutions to understand existing power relations and to identify areas and strategies for change (Weedon 1987: 40-41).

When the text to be analyzed is the Bible, however, the possibility for change is severely limited because the textual corpus is fixed. The canonical collection cannot be changed by adding feminist writings to it. Fuchs seems to be doing what can be done, namely, identifying hierarchical oppositions and demonstrating how biblical discourses achieve their effects.

Feminist post-structural approaches can reveal the patriarchal structure of the Bible, but the analytical process is truncated short of its ultimate goal because of the nature of the Bible; it can neither be transformed like a social or political structure nor expanded like other literary collections. What a feminist post-structuralist approach can accomplish is a change in the way we relate to and understand the Bible but it cannot rescue the Bible itself from patriarchy. For this reason, the need to choose between denying that the Bible is patriarchal and rejecting it because it is patriarchal is not overcome either by structuralist or by post-structuralist approaches.

Jobling's feminist insights into Genesis 2–3 are, nonetheless, important, but like other recent efforts in feminist exegesis, they are unlikely to bring about a substantive change in the way this story is understood by most readers. As Jobling himself concedes, it is the dream world, the myth of the fall, which dominates the text. Jobling is correct, I would think, in identifying the illogic of the myth and the tension that exists between the narrative programs. He is probably also correct in pointing out that the binary oppositions in a text can be 'established' only by being assumed in advance (Jobling 1986a: 13). The point is, however, that they *are* assumed in advance by the patriarchal environment from which the story arose and in which it has been preserved. Mytho-logic, as Leach argues, conflicts with the logic of ordinary experience, but it makes sense in the mind of the speaker and listener so long as both share the same conventional ideas about the attributes of metaphysical time and space (Leach 1976: 70). Myths do not remove the logical contradictions inherent in the binary oppositions but 'fog the issue', so that 'irresolvable logical inconsistencies are lost sight of even when they are openly expressed' (Leach 1974: 58). Thus, a narrative such as Genesis 2–3 serves precisely to make it *possible* to believe that women are not fully human in the same way that men are human. It might not be acceptable to equate women completely with animals but they can be placed in the 'anomalous other' category along with animals. Such a story makes it *possible* to account for human experience by making humanity male, makes it *possible* to reduce the irreducible twoness of humanity to the oneness of maleness. The very function of the story is to hide the illogic and unreality of this patriarchal ideology. Jobling thinks that the text fails at making maleness the norm (Jobling 1986a: 43). But the fact that he is the first to sense this 'failure' suggests that Genesis 2–3 has succeeded exceedingly well for centuries in fogging the illogic of patriarchy. Indeed, the text does actually fail to account for humanity as maleness but it succeeds in *appearing* to do so.

Furthermore, the structural analyses examined strongly suggest that the male mythology in Genesis 2–3 is conveyed in binary oppositions. This observation will not surprise feminists, but should disturb them. Feminists from Simone de Beauvoir to

Rosemary Ruether have identified the problems for women arising out of dualistic world views. Dualism has been a dominant characteristic of Christian theologies of women based upon Genesis 2–3.[1] Structuralist studies seem to suggest that this dualism is inherent in the 'sacred source' from which those theologies are drawn. In other words, dualistic interpretations have not simply been 'imposed' upon Genesis 2–3, as some feminist reformists have argued, but rather derived from it. There is a kind of hermeneutical circle arising out of a text that has been structured by male thinking and which then gives rise to interpretations that historically have been almost exclusively patriarchal.

Deborah Cameron, in her book *Feminism and Linguistic Theory*, comments that 'a tendency to classify the universe by an opposition of male and female principles recurs in patriarchal thinking' (1985: 57). On this level, structural interpretations of Genesis 2–3 appear to be nothing more than an exercise in putting *old* wine in a *new* wineskin (to pervert Mt. 9.17). Structural exegesis may be regarded as a new and powerfully subtle form of patriarchal exegesis but one which does seem to arise legitimately from a patriarchal text. This may explain the fact that women biblical scholars have shown much less interest in structuralism than in deconstruction. Feminist deconstruction exposes the dualism of structuralist analyses of Genesis 2–3 for what it is. It does not, however, remove from the story that which gives rise to such dualistic interpretations.

Not only have structuralist studies of Genesis 2–3 added yet another layer to the patriarchal interpretations of this text, they have also raised what appears to be a fundamental challenge to the viability of feminist reformists' efforts to rehabilitate this text in particular, and the Bible in general, as a spiritual resource for women. They do so by undermining the assumption that the Bible itself is either not patriarchal or that its patriarchal bias is not deeply rooted. If, as the structuralist analyses suggest, the biblical text itself is structured as male mythology or at least is consistently perceived to be structured in that way by

1. See, for example, the discussions by Ruether (1974: 150-83) and Heyward (1987: 36).

the male scholars who have done the studies, then it seems unlikely that feminist reformists will be successful in suppressing that male mythology.

The dilemma the Bible presents to feminists has, therefore, not lessened, as Jobling thinks, but intensified. We can either accept the patriarchal biblical text as sacred and content ourselves with exposing its patriarchy (as Jobling does) or we can expose its patriarchy and reject it as sacred and authoritative. But if we are looking for a sacred scripture that is not patriarchal, that does not construct woman as 'other' and that does not support patriarchal interpretations based on this otherness, we are not likely to find it or to recover it in texts such as Genesis 2–3. If we want an authoritative sacred Scripture that does not make it possible to believe that women are secondary and inferior humans, it appears that we need to make new wine to fill our new wineskins.

Afterword

At the time I was writing 'The Patriarchal Stamp of Scripture' in 1988 it seemed to me that a significant change was taking place within feminist biblical scholarship with respect to the locus of the Bible's 'patriarchal problem'. During the emergence of 'second wave'[1] feminist critique of the Bible in the 1970s, feminists generally worked with the assumption that the principal locus of patriarchy was to be found in male-dominated interpretation rather than in the biblical text itself. From the mid-eighties to the present, there has been a growing recognition that the Bible itself must be acknowledged as the locus of much of the problem for women. The recognition that the Bible itself is a patriarchal document creates a problem for those feminists who want to retain the Bible as a spiritually and religiously authoritative source in their life. It was my view

1. I use this term to emphasize here, as in the foregoing article, that the feminist biblical scholarship of the past two decades follows after the work of nineteenth-century feminists in the United States, who saw an important connection between the social and political oppression of women and the text and interpretation of the Bible.

then, and it remains my view now, that the 'reformist' feminist goal of reclaiming the Bible from its own patriarchal biases, and from those of its interpreters through the centuries, is simply not a viable one. I used Genesis 2–3 as an example text to illustrate my position.

The importance of structuralism and the structural analyses I chose to discuss was that they helped us see the degree to which texts are cultural products, encoding cultural values in their deep or mythic structures. It was David Jobling who first brought together feminist and structuralist interests in the analysis of Genesis 2–3 in a way which raised doubts for me about the potential effectiveness of reading strategies such as those being used by feminist reformists like Phyllis Trible. The culture which produced the biblical texts was a patriarchal one and therefore it should not be surprising that the value system encoded in the Bible is patriarchal. If, as structuralists argue, the deep structures of a text are 'read' at the unconscious level, then it becomes considerably more difficult to resist patriarchal interpretations of the Bible than Trible's work would suggest.

In the time since my article was completed, there has been a virtual flood of reconsiderations of the optimistic reformist arguments made by Trible about specific elements of this text and about her reading strategy in general. David Clines, for example, has re-examined Trible's claim that *'ēzer* connotes a relationship of 'equality' rather than that of an inferior 'helper'. He argued that in this context being a 'helper' is simply not a Hebrew way of being 'equal' and that the only way in which Eve 'helps' Adam is in producing offspring. Thus, proclamations by fathers and doctors of the Christian church based on this story, declaring procreation to be woman's only divinely sanctioned role, were well supported in the text (Clines 1990: 25-48).

A much more general critique of Trible's approach has been made by Susan Lanser (1988: 67-84). Lanser is interested in the operation of language and how readers make inferences in the reading process. For her, the problem with the way in which Trible reads Genesis 2–3 is that it is esoteric because it detaches the text from 'its crucial place in the cultural intertext of human history'. She concedes that it is *possible* to read as Trible does, but such a reading assumes that meaning is solely a product of

semantic and grammatical properties and in doing so denies a fairly standard process of inference which is at work in conventional reading processes. For example, logically *hā'ādām* may not be male before the creation of the woman in Gen. 2.22-23, but ordinary readers infer the maleness of *hā'ādām* because masculine pronouns are used to refer to it and a female helper is created for it.

Lanser makes the same critique of Mieke Bal's efforts to read Genesis 2–3 (and other texts) in a strictly linear fashion (1987: 104-30). Although Bal is critical of Trible's reformist feminist goals, she does agree with her interpretation of *hā'ādām*. Bal is concerned about the 'retrospective fallacy' which occurs when readers project information gained only at the end of the story back onto early elements of the story. The problem, of course, is that the Bible is the kind of text which is read many times and stories like the Adam/Eve story are part of the Western cultural landscape. Preventing all or most readers from making common-sense inferences or 'retrospective fallacies' seems like a daunting, if not hopeless, task.

Genesis 2–3 is certainly not the only text whose reformist feminist interpretations or potential for reformist feminist interpretation is being reconsidered. In 1988 Esther Fuchs was a somewhat isolated voice in exposing the subtle ways in which patriarchal biases are expressed in biblical texts. Today powerful, persuasive and disturbing insights on the patriarchal strategies of biblical texts have been added by feminist scholars such as Cheryl Exum, Gale Yee and Renita Weems.[1]

Some feminist biblical scholars have now quietly stopped talking about reformist goals, while others, such as Mary Ann Tolbert, are acknowledging the growing quandary for feminist believers (Tolbert 1990: 5-23). Indeed, Tolbert's assessment of the situation would seem to support my contention that the past two decades of feminist biblical analysis has intensified, rather than lessened, the dilemma for those who would be 'Christian feminists' or 'Jewish feminists'.

Reformist feminists like Tolbert, however, are still not willing to abandon the biblical tradition spiritually. The strategy now

1. See, for example, Exum 1990: 45-67; Yee 1989; Weems 1989.

offered by Tolbert for overcoming the dilemma can be classified as a reader-oriented approach. Her contention is that the way around the problem of a patriarchal Bible is to be found in the freedom of women as readers to make their own meaning. She concedes that women will still be reading androcentric texts but reading them as women rather than as men. Reading as women, women can challenge the dominant androcentric or patriarchal readings of the establishment (Tolbert 1990: 16-17). In giving priority to the reader in the meaning-making process, Tolbert does recognize that the role of the text cannot be discarded completely: 'readers do not make meanings *ex nihilo*', she admits. But she clearly places more emphasis on the social or cultural role of dominant readings than on the role of the text in controlling the semantic range within which an interpretation is placed (Tolbert 1990: 16-19). Ultimately, therefore, the patriarchal problem is shifted back to interpretation and away from the text.

Tolbert's position is not unlike that expressed in a recent article by feminist theologian Mary McClintock Fulkerson, who draws upon post-structuralist and Marxist approaches to argue that readers, not texts, generate meaning (1991: 53-73). Fulkerson, however, is not as willing as Tolbert to allow a semantic role for the text itself. For Fulkerson, no 'real meaning' is to be found in texts, thus sexism is not an attribute of Scripture but of its being read. She sees her position as virtually diametrically opposed to my position which, she claims, fails to take the reader seriously.[1] While it is true that I was emphasizing the role of the deep structures of the text as a counterbalance to Trible's emphasis on rereading textual surface structures, it would not be my position that the reader has no role. Indeed, I would argue that the reader does generate meaning by creating a new 'text'. In any reading process assumptions and inferences are made; the gaps in the written text are creatively filled in by the reader. But I would also argue that Fulkerson's position goes much too far in the direction of the reader-subject. Placing the locus of meaning so completely

1. Fulkerson has to some extent conflated my views with those of Jobling.

within the reading subject leads me to ask whether it matters if a reader is reading the Bible or Ku Klux Klan literature. If the text does not limit or control the semantic range in any way, then surely we should not worry about such things as hate literature since only those readers who are already committed to anti-Semitism, racism, sexism or anti-feminism will read hate literature as hate literature. I do not think any text, biblical or not, contains a 'real meaning' but rather that texts put constraints on the range within which meanings are constructed.

With Fulkerson's position we also need not concern ourselves with who produces literature. Fulkerson comments that an 'aside' I made about dualities being brought to a text undercuts my claim that dualities are found in a text (Fulkerson 1991: 67).[1] The point is that texts do not appear *ex nihilo* but are created by 'authors' whose ways of thinking are to some extent written into the texts they write. Feminists have long critiqued the tendency of men to think about the world in hierarchized dualistic categories. If the biblical authors are all or mostly male, then it seems reasonable to expect the literature they produce to be 'male' literature insofar as the fictive world it presents is male-imaged. It surely is possible to learn to read this literature in a 'counter-cultural' way, to read it critically as women, but this will not make it women's literature.

Furthermore, the issue of the gender of the reader is as important as the gender of the author and the 'gendered' texts. If men read biblical texts as men (presumably an easy task in that it does not require reading against oneself), and women read biblical texts as women, the problems resulting from the use of the Bible by men in subordinating women or in justifying male violence toward women are not only not solved, they are not even addressed. It would be much more difficult for anti-woman meanings to be constructed by male readers of the Bible if the Bible were a text which consistently and repeatedly made woman-positive, woman-valuing statements of the kind found in feminist literature or if the Bible were replaced by new 'sacred texts' which were women-authored and woman-affirming.

My views about the Bible have not, therefore, changed

1. This is actually Jobling's point but I agree with it.

substantially. As a piece of ancient literature the Bible is of both literary and historical value and continues to need investigation, especially feminist investigation. But to claim the Bible as a text which authoritatively enunciates the divine–human relationship is, inevitably, to tie that relationship to patriarchal values. To be a 'Christian feminist' or a 'Jewish feminist' is to subordinate feminist ideology to the patriarchal ideology of Christianity and Judaism, an ideology founded upon and sustained through their 'sacred scriptures'.

BEYOND GENESIS 3: THE POLITICS OF MATERNAL NAMING*

Ilana Pardes

Not one feminist critic dealing with the Bible has neglected to discuss the story (or stories) of the creation of woman; and yet, despite significant differences in theoretical approach and focus, their readings have been generally confined to Genesis 1–3. One may well ask why. Both J and P develop their respective perceptions of femininity vis-à-vis creation beyond Genesis 3 as well. Genesis 1–3 may in fact be construed as part of a larger unit, what historical-critical scholarship has called 'primaeval history', which ends only at Genesis 11 where the history of the patriarchs and matriarchs commences. This textual unit consists of a *series* of narratives and genealogies dealing with creation, crime and punishment, or both.

The tendency to focus on Genesis 1–3 (common not only among feminists) derives in part from the continuing impact of the Christian perception of the fall as the unequivocal conclusion of creation (cf. Westermann 1972: 2-3). There is, however, no concept of an original fall in Genesis. Primaeval characters fall time and again in a variety of ways. The first fall is not singled out. Fratricide, sleeping with the Sons of God, incest and the building of the Tower of Babel are transgressions as exemplary as the eating of the forbidden fruit. Similarly, creation is an ongoing process. The world is wholly destroyed and recreated in the story of the flood; and on a less cosmic level, this is true of most stories in this unit.

* Reprinted by permission of the publishers from I. Pardes, *Countertraditions in the Bible: A Feminist Approach* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992) by the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

Many feminist critics have offered acute critiques of Christian interpretations of the creation stories, but they have done so without calling into question the status of the fall as a conclusive boundary. Thus Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1895), Kate Millett (1969), Mary Daly (1973), Phyllis Trible (1978) and Mieke Bal (1987) provocatively turn the story of man's fall through woman (as in Paul's reading) into the story of woman's fall through man, ignoring the fact that Eve does not vanish after Genesis 3, nor does she hesitate to rise and fall once again in Genesis 4.

In my own interpretation I will show that the analysis of Genesis 4–11 and especially of Genesis 4–5 is essential to the understanding of both the Priestly and Yahwistic treatments of femininity in Genesis 1–3. I will begin with J's immediate continuation of the story of the Garden of Eden. In the opening verses of Genesis 4 we learn that Adam and Eve (after their banishment) make use of the 'knowledge' they have acquired back west in the Garden. As a result two sons are born, and Genesis 2–3 is linked to the story of Cain and Abel. Knowledge, especially in its sexual sense, is no longer an abstract notion. Now that it is within human reach, propagation takes place and a new mode of discourse arises: genealogy.[1]

Maternal Naming-Speeches

What interests me most about this genealogical note is the point in Gen. 4.1 where Eve, who previously was only an object of naming, becomes a subject of naming. At the birth of her first son, the primordial mother delivers a fascinating naming-speech—*qānîtî 'îš 'ēt* YHWH (rendered by Cassuto as 'I have created a man [equally/together] with the Lord' [1961: 198])—setting the ground for maternal naming-speeches in the Bible.

Naming is not only Adam's prerogative, as Mary Daly (1973: 8) claims, nor is it necessarily a paternal medium. Eve is

1. When defining Gen. 4.1-2 as the point in which such a discourse arises I am referring to J alone. Considering narrative continuum, the first budding of this genre may be traced back to P's brief statement about the tôl^{e}dôt ('begettings') of heaven and earth in Gen. 2.1. For more on genealogies and their function within this literary unit see Westermann 1984: 9-19; Fishbane 1979: 28-29; and Fokkelman 1987: 40-44.

no exception to the rule: more often than not it is the *mother* (or surrogate mother) who names the child.[1] My intention is not to reverse Daly's observations—the very fact that biblical mothers only name their sons rather than daughters (with the exception of Dinah) is already an indication that their power of naming is limited by patriarchal exigencies—but rather to point to the complexity of the interrelations of power and naming in Genesis. Eve is both the object and the subject of naming; and it is her latter capacity which is particularly characteristic of women in the Bible.

Contra Mieke Bal, the one feminist critic with whom I will engage in a more extensive dialogue, I would argue that it is Eve's impressive come-back as a name-giver in Genesis 4—and not the emergence of the proper name 'Eve'—which serves as the final stroke in the formation of the first female character. In an intriguing analysis of phases in the textual development of the first woman, Bal perceives Adam's naming of Eve as the conclusive step which marks the fall of woman and seals her sexual and social role (as defined in Gen. 3.16). In choosing to call her *ḥawwâ*, a name he interprets as 'the mother of all living' (Gen. 3.20), Adam, according to Bal, determines her

1. Here are some statistics: there are about 17 cases in the Bible where the name-giver is male; of these in only 8 cases, which will be marked with an asterisk, a naming-speech is delivered: Gen. 2.23*; 3.21*; 4.26; 5.3; 5.29*; 16.15; 21.3; 35.18; 41.51*, 52*; Exod. 18.3*, 4*; Judg. 8.31; Job 42.14 (Job names his three daughters in one verse); 1 Chron. 7.23*. There are 27 cases of female name-givers and a higher ratio of maternal naming-speeches—66 percent (18 speeches): Gen. 4.1*, 25*; 16.11* (following God's request); 19.37, 38; 29.32*, 33*, 34*, 35*; 30.6*, 8*, 11*, 13*, 18*, 20*, 21, 24*; 35.18 (both Jacob and Rachel name Benjamin); 38.4, 5; Exod. 2.22*; Judg. 13.24; 1 Sam. 1.20*; 4.21*; 2 Sam. 12.24 (corrected text); 1 Chron. 4.98; 7.16. I would like to add that, although in Isaac's case Abraham is the name-giver (Gen. 21.3), Sarah seems to be the one to interpret the name or deliver the naming-speech:

> And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me. And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham that Sarah should have given children suck? For I have born him a son in his old age (Gen. 21.6-7).

To put it differently, Sarah's poetic speech may be defined as an 'implicit name-derivation', in Zakovitch's terms (1980).

character: Eve, from now on, 'is imprisoned in motherhood' (1987: 128).[1] But Bal both mystifies the power of proper names and exaggerates the restrictive nature of Eve's motherhood. Above all, her adherence to the traditional Christian delimitation of the creation stories prevents her from considering the continuation of the representation of the first woman in Genesis 4. She thus overlooks an important means of characterization for women in the Bible and especially in Genesis: naming-speeches. One should bear in mind that biblical naming (especially when it is accompanied by a speech) usually reveals more about the character of the name-giver than the recipient (cf. Sternberg 1985: 330-31). The sequence of speeches of Leah and Rachel wonderfully illustrates this phenomenon in its encapsulation of the sisters' rivalry, of their respective relations to Jacob and to God, and their joy at the birth of their sons.

> And Leah conceived, and bare a son, and she called his name Reuben: for she said, Surely the Lord hath looked (*rā'â*) upon my affliction; now therefore my husband will love me. And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said: Because the Lord hath heard (*šāma'*) that I was hated, he hath therefore given me this son also: and she called his name Simeon (*šim'ôn*)... And Bilhah conceived, and bare Jacob a son. And Rachel said, God hath judged (*dānannî*) me, and hath also heard my voice, and hath given me a son: therefore called she his name Dan. And Bilhah Rachel's maid conceived again, and bare Jacob a second son. And Rachel said: With great wrestlings have I

1. In the spirit of French feminism, with its focus on the concept of *jouissance*, Bal suggests that the name 'Eve' initiates a split between sexuality and motherhood. The first woman, who at first represented both sexuality and motherhood, is 'condemned to predict Mary' upon receiving a name which stresses her maternal role alone. In Bal's hands, Eve's fall becomes a witty inversion of the traditional perception of the original fall: sexuality is not discovered, but rather lost! Yet Bal's deconstruction of Christian mythology entails a problematic perpetuation of Christian concepts. Sexuality and motherhood go hand in hand for Eve in Gen. 4.1 as is usually the case in the Hebrew Bible. The Christian linking of sexuality, sin and guilt (which creates the need to dissociate procreation from sexuality) is foreign to the Yahwistic text. For more on the difference between the respective Jewish and Christian perceptions of sexuality, see Pagels (1988) and Boyarin (forthcoming).

> wrestled (*niptaltî*) with my sister, and I have prevailed: and she called his name Naphtali... And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb. And she conceived, and bare a son; and said, God hath taken away my reproach: And she called his name Joseph (*yôsēp*); and said, The Lord shall add (*yôsēp*) to me another son (Gen. 29.32–30.25).[1]

Eve's speech may seem at first more a drawn shutter than a window; yet, not unlike the speeches of Rachel and Leah, it functions as a means of characterization. I would suggest that Gen. 4.1 presents another phase in the formation of the first woman's relation to God and Adam, as it offers a glimpse of her own perception of motherhood and (pro)creation. (In Gen. 3 Eve's maternal role is presented only through the eyes of God and Adam.)

Before engaging in an extensive analysis of the first maternal speech to be delivered, a preliminary note on this means of characterization is necessary. Among the various devices of characterization in biblical narrative, direct speech is the predominant one. Robert Alter explains the preference for direct discourse as compatible with the monotheistic perception of human freedom. The omniscient biblical narrator 'does not openly meddle with the personages he presents' (1981: 87); rather, he allows them to speak for themselves, with minimal authorial intrusion, giving them enough rope to do as they please.

Naming-speeches are a special type of direct speech, hovering between interior speech and a vocalized ceremonial discourse. (The ambiguity of the biblical 'said'—between thought and speech—confirms this fluidity.)[2] They are constructed, with some variations, according to the following formula: s/he named the child's name X; for s/he said...(the explanation for the name).[3] While at times the word 'for' (*kî*; *'al-kēn*) or one of the two verbs ('named' [*wayyiqrā'/wattiqrā'*]; 'said' [*wayyō'mer/wattō'mer*]) are missing, the speech always consists of a pun

1. The transcriptions in parentheses are mine.
2. See Alter 1981: 67-69; and Sternberg 1985: 97.
3. For more on the use of this formula in biblical narrative both in the naming of characters and of places, see Long 1968.

which creates a phonetic link between the name and its interpretation.[1] Eve's speech thus follows the formal conventions of biblical naming-speeches; it links the name 'Cain' (*qayin*) and the verb *qānâ* ('create') by means of a pun. This phonetic association does not imply that there is an etymological affinity between the two words. 'Cain' in fact derives from the root *qyn* (not *qnh*), meaning 'to shape', or 'fashion' in the context of metal working. In 4.1 a semantic link is at work (*qyn* is a segment which pertains to the semantic field of 'creation'), but this is rarely the case. As Speiser put it, 'a correct or even plausible linguistic derivation would be purely coincidental [in naming-speeches], since the play on the name was the significant thing—aetiology rather than etymology' (1964: 232).[2]

Uprising

Turning to the thematic level, one may well ask: but what does *qānîtî 'îš 'ēt yhwh* mean? Although most commentators would agree that, generally speaking, this speech expresses the primordial mother's joy at the birth of Cain, their translations and interpretations differ significantly. This is far from surprising: every word in this speech poses a problem. The verb *qānâ* is polysemic, a feature which has allowed the by now discredited translation 'to acquire' instead of the less theologically palatable 'to create' (cf. Westermann 1972: 290). The use of the word *'îš* ('man') for a newborn boy is odd. But the final part, *'ēt yhwh* (literally, 'with the Lord'), has been by far the most perplexing element. God, of course, is always present in procreation—opening wombs, giving seed. What is more, he is often an implied addressee in naming-speeches, as is evident in Genesis 29–30. But in Gen. 4.1 he is scandalously treated as a

1. For an analysis of phonetic association in naming-speeches, see Garsiel 1987.

2. Perhaps because it is self-explanatory, Eve does not comment upon her second son's name. The name 'Abel', meaning 'nothingness', is a proleptic name which foreshadows its bearer's untimely death. It serves as a shadowy counterpart of the creativity embodied in 'Cain'. (I am indebted to Chayuta Gurevich for calling my attention to this latter point.)

partner, not quite as the hub around whom everything turns. Most translations (e.g. KJV: 'I have gotten a man from the Lord'; the old JPS: 'I have acquired a man with the help of God'; the new JPSV: 'I have gained a male child with the help of the Lord'), mitigate the problematic aspects of the verse and this is precisely why I have chosen to rely on Cassuto's rendition of this speech.

Let us now follow Cassuto's interpretation of Gen. 4.1. 'The first woman', he claims,

> in her joy at giving birth to her first son, boasts of her generative power, which approximates in her estimation to the Divine creative power. The Lord formed the first *man* (ii 7), and I have formed the second *man...I stand together (i.e. equally) WITH HIM in the rank of creators* (1961: 201).

Note that for Cassuto *'ēt yhwh* not only means 'equally with', but also 'together with'. It is Eve's position in the rank of creators which allows her to become God's partner in the work of creation; it allows her to 'feel the personal nearness of the Divine presence to herself' (p. 202).

Cassuto supports his argument by showing that the verb *qnh* in the sense of 'create' is used both in reference to God's creation of the world—as in the well-known expression *qônê šāmayim wā-'āreṣ*, 'the maker of heaven and earth' (Gen. 14.22)—and, even more relevantly, in the context of divine parental procreation. The two verses that he quotes are: Ps. 139.13, 'For Thou didst form (*qānîtā*) my inward parts, Thou didst knit me together in my mother's womb'; and Prov. 8.22, 'The Lord created me (*qānannî*) at the beginning of His way, the first of His acts of old'. It is precisely by using a verb which in all other cases defines divine (pro)creation that Eve sets the birth of her son on the same footing as the birth of the race.

While some commentators have contested the meaning 'create' for Gen. 4.1 because of its association with the divine realm, Cassuto, with his admirable sensitivity to the traces of pagan elements in the Hebrew Bible, avoids banalizing this speech. He goes on to present a Ugaritic parallel in which the same root (*qny* or *qnw*) appears in the title of Ashera, the Ugaritic mother goddess: *qnyt 'ilm*, 'the creatress/bearer of the

gods'. The findings of John Skinner (1910: 102-103) and, more recently, of Isaac Kikawada (1972: 33-37) concerning this verse reinforce the notion that Eve is endowed with traits which in pagan works characterized the creatress. Skinner points to a strikingly similar verse in the bilingual Babylonian creation myth: 'Aruru [the mother goddess], together with him [Marduk] created the seed of mankind'. Similarly, in the Atra-Ḫasis myth, as Kikawada points out, the creatress Mami (quite an appropriate name for a mother goddess) shapes a man out of clay with Enki's help. In both cases the word *itti*, meaning 'with' or 'together with' (analogous to the prepositional sense of the Hebrew *'ēt*) appears.

Eve's naming-speech may be perceived as a trace from an earlier mythological phase in which mother goddesses were very much involved in the process of creation, even if in a secondary position, under the auspices of the supreme male deity. What makes Cassuto's reading especially interesting is his consideration of the impact of this trace in the Bible. A speech of this sort cannot but be a bold provocation in a monotheistic context. If a mother goddess—be it Ashera, Aruru or Mami—had delivered a similar speech, it could have been construed as 'factual' or even as a token of modesty, but when the primordial biblical mother—who is a mere human being—claims to have generative powers which are not unlike God's, she is as far from modesty as one can get.[1]

Of course Eve's hubristic tendencies do not begin here. Already in Genesis 3 the first woman violates the divine decree, opting to become like God. 'Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil' (Gen. 3.4-5), says the serpent; and Eve, who finds his argument attractive, decides to rebel against God's possessive hold on knowledge. In fact, Eve's naming-speech is an interesting

1. In this respect I disagree with Kikawada's suggestion that Gen. 4.1 is 'a humble expression of the mother Eve' (1972: 37). In his otherwise illuminating comparison of Mami's declaration of dependence on Enki in her creation of man to Eve's speech, he fails to consider the very different context within which Eve's words are said.

development of her first rebellion against the Father. If in Genesis 3 she sought to acquire a potential, in Genesis 4 the primordial mother explores the ways in which the knowledge she illegally acquired in the Garden of Eden may be realized. Her hubris is transferred to the realm of creativity. By defining herself as a creatress, she now calls into question the preliminary biblical tenet with respect to (pro)creation—God's position as the one and only Creator.

Hubris is not only characteristic of Eve in primaeval history. Most primaeval characters exceed human limits in one way or another. They all tend to be more theomorphic than post-diluvian characters. Enoch and Noah 'walk with God' (another case of a provocatively intimate *'ēt*, meaning 'with', vis-à-vis the Father); the daughters of Adam sleep with the sons of God; the people of Babel seek 'to make a name for themselves' by building a tower that would reach heaven; and most of them enjoy a remarkable longevity, which seems to be a curious compromise between mortality and immortality (it is only after the generation of the *nᵉpîlîm*—the giants—that God decides to limit human longevity to 120 years at most). What makes Eve's transgression of boundaries somewhat different is the fact that her speech is a critique not only of monotheistic principles, but also of the underlying patriarchal presuppositions of monotheism. Unlike the inhabitants of Babel with their scandalous phallic creation, the first woman challenges *both* the divine restrictions on human creativity and the exclusion of the feminine from the representation of creation.

Reversal: Dialogic Naming

Eve's provocative speech, however, is not only an expression of feminine pride directed toward God. Adam is another important addressee. The first woman, after all, is a servant of two masters. Here, as before, her conflict with God is inseparable from her relationship with Adam. Although in Genesis 3 Adam joins forces with Eve against the Master of Masters, the fact that she is punished for this conspiracy by subjugation to her accomplice suggests that these two male authorities have more in common than is apparent at first. How does Adam enter into

the picture? Through the word *'îš*, Cassuto sees the unusual use of the term in this context as an evocation of God's creation of man in 2.7; but bearing in mind that the word *'ādām* (and not *'îš*) is used in 2.7, one is led to look elsewhere. *'îš*, I would say, primarily refers back to Adam's first naming-speech in 2.23—'This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman (*'iššâ*), because she was taken out of Man (*'îš*)'—where the concept 'man' first appears.

'The old naming was not a product of a dialogue—a fact inadvertently admitted in the Genesis story of Adam's naming the animals and woman', writes Daly in *Beyond God the Father* (1973: 8). But there is more of a dialogue 'in the old naming' than she suspects. *qānîtî 'îš 'ēt yhwh* is, among other things, a response to Adam's naming of woman; it is a response to his almost dream-like reversal of the order of things, to his indirect claim to have created woman out of his body, to his celebration of the generative capacity of his flesh and bones. She responds in the medium he chose to use: naming-speeches. It is not you who created woman out of man (with divine help), she seems to claim, but it is I who created you (*'îš*) together with YHWH! Second person is avoided, but the dialogic thrust is unmistakable. The rivalry between the sexes, not unlike the rivalry between Leah and Rachel, is represented at this point through a compelling exchange (a match almost) of naming-speeches.

To return to *'îš*, the marker[1] which made this intertextual interaction possible, I would suggest that it be seen as a condensation of Cain and Adam. Having two referents, *'îš* allows Eve to take pride both in her role vis-à-vis the birth of Cain, as well as retroactively to point to the first man as another product of her creativity. Through her naming of Cain, Eve thus rewrites Genesis 2 as a subversive comment on Adam's displacement of the generative power of the female body. Perhaps her speech is a condensation of two versets (Adam's speech in Gen. 2, one should bear in mind, is a parallelism), which ran as follows: 'I shaped a child (*yeled*) equally with YHWH/I created a man (*'îš*) together with God'. The second verset is, as is often

1. I am using Ben-Porat's terms (1976).

the case, an intensified repetition of the first verset.[1] This, of course, is only a conjecture. Whether or not an uncondensed form of Eve's naming-speech actually existed, this parallelism may illustrate why condensation is altogether necessary, or rather, why the text is so nebulous. Both conjectured versets are scandalous but the latter one is the more so. If in the first verset the primordial mother overrates her maternal capacities, in the second one she dares to change history; she presents herself not only as Cain's mother, but also as the bearer of Adam and perhaps even as the ex-consort of YHWH. The conflation of the two ideas which obscures the latent meanings of Eve's speech is precisely what enables their representation; it is a consequence of censorship and a means of avoiding it.[2]

Bal's claim that the name 'Eve' imprisons the first woman in motherhood should by now seem rather anachronistic. I do not mean to deny the use of the institution of motherhood by patriarchy to repress women, but rather to point to the special features of this particular story. What is most striking about Genesis 2–3 is the extent to which woman is *denied* her role as mother, as creatress, by both God and Adam. She is called 'the mother of all living' only at the very end, after all things are already created by God and the first man. Had Adam called her Eve in Genesis 2, approximately where *'ādām* begins more clearly to function as a proper name (perhaps as a continuation of 2.24), his (pro)creative dream would have been undermined. It would have been a little too odd if he were to call his daughter, so to speak, the 'mother of all living' right after his creation of her. The deferred emergence of the proper name 'Eve' may thus be seen as a narratological strategy which

1. For more on the various ways in which the second verset in a parallelism may intensify the first, see Alter 1985 and Kugel 1981. Relying on Cassuto's observation that Lamech's triumphal song in Gen. 4.23—'For I have slain a man (*'îš*) to my wounding, a young man (*yeled*) to my hurt'—is an antithetic parallelism to Eve's poetic naming in Gen. 4.1 (1961: 242), I have ventured to use *'îš* and *yeled* ('boy') in Eve's case as well. (The KJV translation of *yeled* is inaccurate, cf. Alter 1985: 11-12.)

2. On the work of condensation, see Freud's seminal analysis in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, especially his consideration of verbal manifestations of condensation.

enables Adam to act out his parturient fantasies, as a compensation for his relatively minute share in procreation.

But there is one more crucial point which indicates that a reversal of sexual roles is at stake here: it is the only case in the Bible where a man names a newly born female and delivers a speech to celebrate the occasion![1] Adam's naming of woman, which has been taken to be representative of male dominion in language, thus turns out to be the exception to the rule; it is meant to single out and glorify the creation of the first woman while allowing Adam to play the (m)other's part.

In defining woman's creation out of Adam's body as a reversal of sexual roles, I have followed the traditional psychoanalytic focus. Rank, Freud and Roheim interpret this reversal in Genesis 2 as a disguise for 'the well-known motif of mother-incest',[2] Fromm (1951: 233-34) perceives it as a manifestation of pregnancy envy; and Dundes (1983: 35-53) argues that Adam's usurpation of a maternal role is a case of *couvade* (the term *couvade* designates 'a widespread custom whereby fathers or men about to become fathers ritually went through the motions of confinement and childbirth').

On the question of male fantasies, I am probably closest to Fromm, although I would change his diachronic depiction of the relations between pregnancy envy and penis envy (he suggests that the former preceded the latter) with a synchronic one. Echoing J.J. Bachofen's views of an evolutionary sequence from matriarchy to patriarchy, Fromm defines Adam's creation of Eve as a trace from a matriarchal era, from a time when the role of the mother was in fact enviable. 'In order to defeat the mother, the male must prove that he is not inferior, that he has the gift to produce' (p. 233), and this is precisely what Adam tries do. According to Fromm, it is only after the Fall—when God ascribes to Eve a subordinate role with respect to her husband—that male domination is established. 'Quite obviously

1. Job, who names his three daughters, is another fascinating exception. In Job's case, however, no naming-speeches are delivered.

2. The quotation appears in Freud's letter to Jung (1974: 288), where he endorses Otto Rank's suggestions. Roheim (1940) further analyzes Adam's oedipal desires in 'The Garden of Eden'.

this establishment of male domination points to a previous situation in which he did not rule' (p. 234).

Bachofen's observations, however, are speculative. There is no clear-cut proof that a matriarchal order ever existed. But this need not undermine the relevance of pregnancy envy to Genesis 2. As Bruno Bettelheim suggests, *each sex* 'feels envy in regard to the sexual organs and functions of the other' (1962: 10). Pregnancy envy is as common a phenomenon in patriarchal society as penis envy, even if the former is more easily sublimated or compensated for in such a cultural context. Despite his superior role, Adam cannot help admiring, in Karen Horney's terms,

> this life-creating power of woman... And this is exactly the point where problems arise. For it is contrary to human nature to sustain appreciation without resentment toward capabilities that one does not possess (1967: 115).

I would like to emphasize that my reading diverges significantly from the traditional psychoanalytic stance in one crucial point: it takes into consideration Eve's subjectivity and independent narratological position.[1] In quest of what is lacking in him, Adam seeks to appropriate the (m)other. But Eve does not acquiesce in this appropriation. She is not the perfect Other, nor is she a (m)other devoid of subjecthood. First in the Garden of Eden and then in her naming-speech, the primordial mother challenges the attempts of both God and Adam to be sole subjects of procreation.

Falling Again

I do not mean to turn the Bible into a feminist manifesto but rather to show that, while the dominant thrust of the Bible is clearly patriarchal, patriarchy is continuously challenged by antithetical trends. That such a challenge in turn does not escape criticism may be seen not only in the punishment of Eve in Genesis 3, but also in the change in tone evident in Eve's second

1. It is worth noting that the lack of consideration of the mother's subjectivity is rooted in psychoanalytic theory. For more on this issue, see Suleiman 1985: 352-77.

naming-speech. (The latter speech pertains to the Yahwistic genealogy with which Gen. 4 concludes.) Genesis 4.1 is not quite the final note in the characterization of the first woman.

> And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth (*šēt*): For God, said she, hath appointed (*šāt*) me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew (4.25).

If Eve was the subject of the earlier speech now it is God who is the subject, the one who 'grants' (*šāt*) a seed. He is restored to his conventional role as the protagonist of procreation. In contrast to Eve's first naming-speech, which dramatically inaugurated maternal name-giving by associating female generativity with cosmic creation, her second speech seems to offer a more subdued model; and as such it can be less obscure than the first. Is Eve more modest and careful at this point due to her first encounter with death? Does she take God's punitive abilities a little more seriously now that death is no longer an abstract concept? Cassuto is insightful once again:

> This time Eve does not give voice to feelings of joy and pride such as she expressed when her eldest son was born. Her mood is one of mourning and sorrow for the family calamity, and her words are uttered meekly, with humility and modesty. On the first occasion she gloried in her creative power and her collaboration with the Lord; this son she now regards purely as a gift vouchsafed to her by Heaven. In the former instance she mentioned the name of the Lord, the Tetragrammaton, which signifies the Godhead in His personal aspect and direct relationship to His creatures...now, in her hour of mourning, it seems as if God is far removed from her, in the supernal heights of Heaven...as that transcendental Power denoted by the appellation Elohim (1961: 246).

While I disagree with Cassuto's description of the speech as an expression of mourning—it is, after all, primarily a celebration of birth, if toned down—I find his analysis of the change that takes place in Eve's relation to God most convincing. Whether or not one accepts Cassuto's reading of the respective meanings of YHWH and Elohim (which is in a sense a development of the rabbinic notion that YHWH represent's God's mercy, while Elohim denotes the distant God of strict judgment [*Gen. R.* 12, 15]), the first woman, at this point, no longer regards God

as co-creator, but rather as *the* Creator. Her words now convey respect for the boundaries between the human and divine realms.[1]

Taking Cassuto's observations a step further, I would propose that this fall between Eve's first and second naming-speeches be added to the long list of Yahwistic stories of pride/crime and punishment in primaeval history. (The question of human transgression, one should bear in mind, is a Yahwistic speciality. All stories of crime and punishment in this unit are Yahwistic, with the exception of the Flood story which is a patchwork of J and P.) My contention is, in other words, that the tragedy which befalls Eve's sons is meant, among other things, as a retributive deflation of her hubris. The son who was the object of her (pro)creative pride turns out to be the destroyer of her creation. This by no means implies that the killing of Abel and the banishment of Cain are Eve's fault; rather, it is an indication of the complex interweaving of these two Yahwistic texts.[2] Interestingly, not unlike other stories which pertain to this list (e.g., the Garden of Eden, Cain and Abel, and the Flood), destruction is followed by re-creation, or rather, the punishment is followed by a certain reconciliation between God and the 'sinner': the first woman receives another son and renders unto God what is his.

Note that Eve's acknowledgment of God's power does not entail an approval of Adam's rule. The primordial mother still treats procreation as if it were an outcome of a transaction between God and her alone. Such transactions, in fact, are a common topic in maternal naming-speeches (cf., Gen. 30.24; 1 Sam. 1.20); they serve, in a sense, as a female counterpart to the long conversations men have with God concerning seed and stars.

1. The significant difference between Eve's speeches is endowed with an interesting twist in rabbinic interpretations. While Cain is considered to be the product of Eve's intercourse with the serpent (*PRE* 21), Seth is associated with the Messiah (cf. *Genesis Rabbah*).

2. An analogous case which may clarify this issue is David's punishment in 2 Sam. 12.11. The strife which characterizes the house of David is construed as punishment for David's sin, even though each one of David's sons has independent motives for his deeds.

Creative Hierarchies

The ongoing tense interplay between a dominant patriarchal discourse and various opposing undercurrents is analogous to the tension between, in Robert Alter's terms, 'the divine plan and the disorderly character of actual historical events... between God's will, His providential guidance, and human freedom' (1981: 33). God may be the ultimate authority and yet he is continuously disobeyed. Similarly, man has been officially allotted the position of master vis-à-vis woman, but this does not imply that she necessarily accepts his authority. Adam is not the last man to have 'harkened' to a woman's 'voice'. By the same token, Eve never fully acknowledges Adam's rule, as her naming-speeches indicate. And even if she accepts divine authority in her second naming-speech, this does not mean that her daughters will refrain from calling God's authority into question. The official hierarchy God-man-woman is never a stable one in the Yahwistic corpus, and to a lesser degree this is true of biblical narrative as a whole. The capacity to transgress boundaries is one of the essential traits of the biblical character, whether male or female. The difference lies in the respective position of man and woman in this hierarchic structure.

By way of conclusion, I will analyze the dynamics of this hierarchy in the realm of creation. The 'official' hierarchy goes as follows: God is the Creator, Adam is the son of God and Eve is the daughter of Adam (to evoke another primaeval story). David Damrosch aptly describes the relation of God and Adam in this respect:

> In creating Adam, God sought to make an earthly representative, like himself but subordinate; and this is just what Adam himself proves to need. The problem for God here is that Adam is so much like God that he shares the lack that God had felt, and where God desired an Adam, Adam desires an Eve (1987: 140).

But the story of creation does not end with the desires of God and Adam. The problem for both male authorities is that Eve rebels against her role as a subordinate of a subordinate in a field in which the female body has such a prominent role.

Through the naming of her sons, the primordial mother insists upon her own generative powers and attempts to dissociate motherhood from subordination. To put it differently, by taking pleasure in her creativity she attempts to undo God's punishment in Gen. 3.16, to misread God's linking of female procreation with sorrow and with subjugation to man.

Exceeding the restrictive border of Genesis 3 makes one thing clear: the first feminist reader of the creation story is none other than Eve herself.

When P Expands on Genesis 1

So far I have dealt with the Yahwistic texts beyond Genesis 3, but the Priestly writers too have more to say about the nature of creation and they say it mostly through long, uniform and systematized genealogies called *tôl^{e}dôt* ('begettings'), the very trademark of this strand (cf. Westermann 1972: 12-18, 347-57). The *tôl^{e}dôt* of Adam in Genesis 5, the Priestly response to the unruly narrativized genealogical notes of the Yahwist(s) in Genesis 4, commence with a recapitulation of the creation of humanity in Genesis 1:

> This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God he made him; male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day they were created. And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth. And the days of Adam after he had begotten Seth were eight hundred years: and he begat sons and daughters: And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died. And Seth lived an hundred and five years, and begat Enosh: And Seth lived after he begat Enosh eight hundred and seven years and he begat sons and daughters: And all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years: and he died...(Gen. 5.1-8).

Westermann rightly argues that this genealogy is meant primarily to show that

> the plan of God in creating human beings is spelling itself out... The imperative 'be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth', is being carried out in Gen. 5. The power of the blessing

> shows itself effective in the relentless rhythm and steady succession of generations which stretch out across time (1972: 348).

Note, however, that once God's plan is spelled out, the patriarchal presuppositions of the Priestly narrative become clear. No mother (or wife) is mentioned; no daughter's name forms part of the list. Surely the participation of females in these begettings is implied by the repetition of the verse 'male and female created he them' at the very opening of the chapter and by the explicit definition of *'ādām* as a generic name in 5.2 ('and he called their name *'ādām*. But procreation becomes primarily a male issue once the generic term *'ādām* in 5.1-2 turns into the proper name Adam in 5.3, once the relentless listing of ancestors begins. From this point on, fathers (from Adam to Noah) are presented as the primary agents of the divine blessing.

Going beyond Genesis 3 to examine the Priestly depiction of the realization of the divine plan is thus essential to the understanding of Gen. 1.27. Even if God, according to P, created man and woman simultaneously, this act, as Genesis 5 makes clear, does not quite prescribe equality between the sexes. To put it differently, the Priestly work may be acknowledging a certain symmetry between male and female on the cosmic level, but when dealing with the social realm, procreation turns out to be the perpetuation of male seed in male seed. Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1895: 20-21) and Phyllis Trible (1978: 1-31), who put so much emphasis on the liberating qualities of this verse (for the former it is proof that the 'masculine and feminine elements exactly equal and balance each other', both in the human realm and in the godhead; for the latter it serves as a guiding metaphor in the process of 'depatriarchalizing' biblical texts), take it out of context by neglecting to examine its reappearance and development in Genesis 5.

P versus J

The analysis of Genesis 4 and 5 may also illuminate the interrelations between the respective treatments of femininity in the Yahwistic and Priestly strands. *Contra* Bal, I do not find the Priestly writers to be such 'good readers' of their precursor(s). In

fact there is a good deal of misreading in their reinterpretation of the Yahwistic text.[1] A closer look at Gen. 5.3, one of the deviant verses in the otherwise orderly and monotonous Priestly genealogy, may serve as an illustration of this phenomenon. I would suggest that 5.3 be seen as a Priestly misreading of Eve's speech in 4.1, as an attempt to refute the possibility of theomorphic begetting by females. Following in God's footsteps, Adam begets a son, Seth, in *his* likeness and image: *wayyoled bidmûtô kᵉṣalmô*. If in 4.1 Eve's creation is presented by a divine term (*qnh*), now it is Adam's generative capacities that are defined by an expression which otherwise depicts God's (pro)creation alone. The image of Adam's wife, who is nameless in P, is denied the option of re-presenting itself.

Another more important contradiction between the Yahwistic genealogy and the Priestly one leads us back to the question of naming. In the genealogy of P, Adam, rather than Eve, names Seth. Even though Eve is somewhat more humble in her last naming-speech, her role as name-giver is still apparently too powerful for the Priestly writers (who solely recount paternal naming),[2] so much so that they deviate from the recurrent structure of the genealogy to mention the fact that Adam named his son. The primary model for this paternal name-giving seems to be none other than God, whose naming of *hā-'ādām* is solemnly depicted in 5.2.

Let me make clear that my objective is not to turn J into the

1. My analysis of the interrelations between the Yahwistic and Priestly strands is informed by Damrosch's (1987) insightful literary-historical examination of this topic.

2. There are only three incidents of naming in P and, in all these cases, the father is the name-giver (Gen. 5.3; 16.15; 21.3). E.B. Cross sees the prominent role of mothers in naming in J as an indication that 'the Hebrews passed through a stage in which kinship was reckoned through the mother rather than the father'. According to Cross, the matronymic system was eventually replaced by a patronymic one, which explains the lack of female name-givers in P (1927: 1-38). The fact that there are fathers, if relatively few, who name their sons in J refutes his observation. Cross, like Fromm and many other scholars of his time, applies Bachofen's speculative observations to the Bible. His analysis, however, is illuminating in its consideration of the difference between J and P in the realm of naming.

egalitarian source and P into the sexist version. What I have tried to show throughout my discussion is that patriarchy reigns in both strands. The difference between their respective treatments of femininity is primarily a question of configuration. While Yahwistic texts allow for a certain dramatization of the struggle between the sexes which, as we have seen, is intertwined with the human–divine conflict, Priestly traditions avoid conflicts just as they avoid narrative. The Priestly discourse is an exact legalistic discourse which is primarily meant to consecrate rituals and reinforce the power of the divine–human covenant (cf. Weinfeld 1979). The Priestly God is distant and formal, not quite the sort of deity who engages in conflicts with human beings. If in J humanity violates God's decree in order to acquire divine traits, in P such transgressions are avoided. The creation of man and woman in God's image is presented as part of the divine plan from the outset. Boundaries are boundaries.

Even when the Priestly texts deal with the human level alone, no interest in the complexities of human relations is revealed. Thus, for example, rivalry between siblings, one of J's favorite topics, is smoothed away in the Priestly rendering of it. As Gunkel puts it,

> When it comes to P...he makes a clean sweep: he simply omits altogether what is offensive...he even goes to the length of maintaining the precise contrary to the tradition: Ishmael and Isaac together peacefully buried their father (xxv. 9), and so did Jacob and Esau (xxxv. 29) (1964: 152).

Similarly, the rivalry between the sexes is not a major Priestly concern. Man's authority is taken for granted. The Priestly God, when he troubles himself to speak to humanity, speaks solely to the fathers and sends through them messages to the mothers, when necessary. The limited power which women do end up exerting is not an outcome of a struggle between the sexes, but once again part of a carefully designed plan.

Mixed Languages

Lacking the formal markers we are so accustomed to in modern literature, not to mention its composite character, the Bible surely frustrates any attempt to define authoritative textual

boundaries. Considering the problematics of textual delimitation is of course essential to the understanding of modern texts as well, but one need not ignore the specific problems the Bible raises in this respect. It may be difficult to determine where a Faulknerian novel begins or ends since all of Faulkner's books pertain to the Yoknapatawpha saga, but dealing with a text with no division into chapters, parts and so on,[1] a text which was composed by sundry authors during approximately a dozen centuries, requires a different hermeneutic suspicion.[2] By calling into question the 'flaming swords' which Christian theology has treated as the 'original' authorial ending of creation, I have tried to make a case for a feminist reconstruction of biblical poetics which is historical both in its consideration of biblical ideology and in its attention to the history of the composition of the text. To respect the otherness of the ancient text, I think, may not only invigorate the critical gesture of biblical feminist criticism (cf. Bal 1986), but also shed light on the heterogeneity of the Bible, on the complex dialogue between the various manifestations of patriarchal ideology and the antithetical trends which challenge the monotheistic repression of femininity. The Tower of Babel, with its monolithic character, is an impossible mode of creation. It is the confounding mixture of dispersed languages which best represents the art of biblical narrative.

1. One should bear in mind that the division of the biblical text into chapters was established only in the thirteenth century.

2. I am referring to the polemic statements of Perry and Sternberg in their rejoinder 'Zehirut Sifrut' (Beware! Literature) (1970: 631). Responding to the accusation that they have uncritically accepted the superimposed division into chapters in their analysis of the story of David and Bath-Sheba, Perry and Sternberg suggest that textual demarcation is as problematic in modern texts as in the Bible. Faulkner's novels provide just one of their examples.

WOMEN, MEN, GODS, SEX AND POWER: THE BIRTH OF A BIBLICAL MYTH

Philip R. Davies

One of the strategies of a feminist biblical exegesis is a deconstructive one, in the sense that it seeks to discover within the biblical text meanings and voices which lie at the margin, subordinated to the dominant meaning or voice, and to reverse the hierarchy.[1] This hermeneutical strategy nicely parallels the political strategy of underprivileged groups (homosexual, black, poor, female, physically handicapped) in deconstructing the 'meaning' of democratic society, so that the dominant voice, or interest, that of 'normality', of the majority is overturned by the voices of minorities, and it is demonstrated that democracy implies the rights of minorities, since, for example, every member of the majority can be shown to be also a member of a minority. Individual freedom is not compatible with the domination of a value of 'normality', of 'majority'. Just as modern democracies are coming to terms with the necessity of adapting to multiculturalism, so interpreters of texts are (at least some of them) coming to terms with the necessity of plural readings.

My strategy in this essay is to extract from within a biblical story another, alternative story which has been digested and yet whose remains allow us to reconstitute it and, according to our own wishes, either reposition it into a position of priority (overturning the hierarchy) or emphasize it to the point where the whole story must become ambivalent, permitting no single authorized interpretation (abolishing the hierarchy). The story I am dealing with runs, as a whole, from Gen. 2.5 to 9.20, and exhibits, as does so much biblical composition, a chiastic

1. See further the articles by Bal and Milne in this volume.

structure. Thus, it begins with Adam as a 'worker of the soil' (2.5) and ends with Noah as a 'man of the soil'; a curse is imposed on the ground (3.17) and later a promise is given not to repeat the curse, but rather to alleviate it (8.21); Cain's offering is rejected (4.4) while Noah's is accepted (8.20). This chiastic infrastructure supports a main plot in delivering the dominant reading, which is as follows. As a result of the disobedience of the first humans to a divine command, in which the woman played the role first of seduced and then of seducer, humans were expelled from their original locale, alienated from the soil, and discovered violence, but also developed technology and art. The near destruction of the human race by a flood, which followed upon that degeneration, led to a restoration of the race, though with its imperfections recognized and reluctantly condoned by the deity.[1]

And now to the marginal story which has been, as I said, digested. The digestive process has not, however, entirely absorbed it: at 6.1-4 there remains a sizeable trace of this story, whose extraneous, autonomous origin is fairly evident. The only partially accomplished process of digestion is evident in the numerous exegetical difficulties which attend these verses. Who are these 'sons of God'? What is meant by YHWH's 'spirit' (Hebrew רוח) no longer 'striving' (Hebrew דון) in humanity? Are the 120 years an individual lifespan or the lapse of time before the flood?[2] Who are the previously unmentioned 'Nephilim'? And why are the offspring of the divine males and the human females called, with obvious approval, 'nobles' and 'heroes'?[3] The overall impression gained from this episode is of an incomplete account, including characters who have no place in the main story, and events that do not seem to lead anywhere in particular. The impression both that something fuller has been compressed and also that the episode fits uneasily into the plot of the larger story is striking. The critic can hardly conclude that the contents have been created in their present form *de novo* by

1. For a discussion of this chiasm, and of the story generally, see Davies 1986.

2. For a discussion of these options, see Clines 1979.

3. This is quite clearly the import, if not indeed the exact meaning of the terms גברים and אנשי־שם

the author for a specific function, because no plausible function is apparent. If the implied reader of this episode is not to have been as bewildered as the modern reader, then that reader must have been privy to more information than the story has yet provided—almost certainly, in fact, a more complete story in itself.

What that story might have been can be deduced from hints within Gen. 6.1-4 and from other allusions in the biblical literature. But the most important clue lies in a Jewish text composed in the third or second century BCE. In *1 Enoch* 6–11 are found, combined, two versions of what is essentially the same story—one featuring as villain Semihaza, one Asael/Azazel—whose basic elements are as follows:[1]

1. Some of the 'sons of heaven' descended and married mortal women (6.6).
2. They taught various arts and sciences, including astrology, medicine, botany, cosmetics, sword-, knife- and armour-making (7.1; 8.1-3).
3. They begat giants who brought oppression and bloodshed upon the earth (7.2).
4. The earth cried out to God (9.2).
5. The sons of heaven were commanded to be bound for seventy generations (10.4.12).

This story has been evaluated differently by various scholars. For Milik, it represents an essentially older version of the story than that in Genesis 6 (1971: 349; cf. Milik 1976). Barker agrees with this assessment (1980).[2] Most other scholars, however, regard it as a late haggadic development of the biblical story. In a detailed analysis of the *1 Enoch* passage, P.D. Hanson has concluded that a basic story concerning a group of angels led by Semihaza has been amplified by the inclusion of sections in which Azazel is the villain. Hanson suggests that the Azazel story was developed organically out of the Semihazah story in

1. For English translations, see Charles 1913: II, 191-95; Charlesworth 1983: 15-19. The version of the story in *Jubilees* 5 (see Charles 1913: II, 20-21) appears to be based, unlike the *Enoch* version, entirely on Gen. 6.1-4.

2. The recent commentary by M. Black (1985: *ad loc.*) also agrees with Milik's contention.

order to relate that story to the 'scapegoat ritual' of Leviticus 16 (1977). But this is improbable. It is true that the Qumran Aramaic text of *Enoch* has Asael, which also seems to be underlying the Greek. Yet Azazel is certainly known as the villain of the myth according to the (Hebrew) Qumran fragments 4Q180–181 (see Milik 1976: 248-52). The exact name of the villain in the *1 Enoch* version is not important; we have ancient evidence of three alternative names, one of which is Azazel. It is the existence of the myth itself which is the issue.

But, other objections aside,[1] there is a major obstacle against Hanson's thesis—and at the same time to all those who take for granted that the *1 Enoch* story is a haggadic expansion of the biblical story and look for its *point d'appui* in the Hellenistic epoch.[2] It is that the biblical texts in question—Leviticus 16 as well as Gen. 6.1-4—remain unaccounted for. Gen. 6.1-4 implies a more complete story about the descent of heavenly beings, and the description of Leviticus 16 implies knowledge of an Azazel. To suppose that a complete myth, or myths, were first truncated in the biblical literature and then later expanded again from the truncated form in *1 Enoch* is unnecessarily elaborate and intrinsically improbable

The ceremony of the 'scapegoat' described in Leviticus 16 culminates in the sending of a goat into the wilderness 'to or for Azazel' (לעזאזל). There is no consensus among commentators on the passage (many of whom do not bother to consider *1 Enoch*) as to who or what Azazel was, but they generally assume that those who described and performed the ritual did know. What, then, are these people likely to have known? The answer implied by *1 Enoch* 6–11 is that in the wilderness Azazel lies buried under

1. Hanson's source criticism is, in any case, rather more precise than the nature of the textual material permits, and his account of the structure of the Semihazah and Azazel elements is exceedingly elaborate, relying on themes derived (with admittedly great erudition) from Hurrian, Ugaritic and Greek mythology. Furthermore, his suggestion that a single account should be converted into a double account as a deliberate act of editorial expansion is improbable; it is surely more likely that the combination in our *1 Enoch* text is the result of an editorial combination of sources already available.

2. Such as Nickelsburg 1977 and Collins 1984: 38. Cf. also Delcor 1976.

a rock, awaiting his judgment. Hence, the reason for sending the sin-laden goat to Azazel is that Azazel is responsible for bringing these sins into the world in the first place. The ritual accomplishes the removal of sins from Israel and their transfer to the divine being who effected them, and upon whom the punishment of God has been decreed. The ultimate destruction of Azazel will thus also secure the ultimate destruction of the accumulated sins of Israel.

It does seem plausible, then, that the story preserved in *1 Enoch* is the sort of story which the implied reader of Gen. 6.1-4 would have known. The author of Gen. 6.1-4 has chosen to digest this story because left undigested, either outside or inside his[1] own story, it would undermine, indeed it would oppose, that story.

But now that we have seen the digested story in its full form, we can identify other pieces of it elsewhere in Genesis 2–6, though not as still undigested organs but having been absorbed and reprocessed into organic elements of that story. Here are those elements:

Genesis	*1 Enoch*	
4.11	9.1	Blood shed upon the earth.
4.11	9.2	The earth cries out.
	9.10	Blood cries out.
4.12-13	10.4-5	Villain cast into desert.
4.15, 24	10.12	Sevenfold, seventy-sevenfold, seventy generations.
4.22	8.1	Instruments of bronze and iron, swords, knives, shields, breast-plates.
4.23-24	9.1ff.	Widespread violence.

These parallels demonstrate a wider correspondence between the Genesis 2–6 story and the story of the descent of the heavenly beings, which, I am suggesting, is to be seen as the result of the writer of the former deliberately absorbing the structure of the latter story. It is true that items such as the Kenite genealogy, stockbreeder–agriculturalist rivalry, and aetiology of nomadic folk song of revenge provide almost all of the *raw material* of the narrative. But the *plot* which has

1. The implied author of the story, like the implied reader, is, I think, male. I am arguing, at any rate, that the ideology is a male one.

determined the manner of assembly of these diverse fragments is disclosed by the parallels with the story of the descent of the heavenly beings.

The fact that the biblical story is structurally only a variant of the non-biblical descent story explains why the descent story exists in a mutilated form in 6.1-4. Both stories tell of the violation of the earth and the introduction into the human world of sin and violence, but also of technology and arts, and of the punishment to be inflicted on the perpetrator. In the case of the descent story the origin lies in heaven, and the punishment awaits the divine malefactor in the future. The biblical story attributes everything to the human race, which has already received its punishment in a permanent curse, though one later alleviated by a restoration after the flood. The place of Azazel (by whatever name) is taken by Adam the disobedient, by Cain the shedder of blood, and by Cain's descendants, the bringers of more violence (Lamech, 4.23-4) and also of arts and technology (Jubal the musician and Tubal-cain the smith, 4.21-22)

Thus what is the canonical (and for the Christian religion, the definitive) account of the origins of sin, violence and civilization may be interpreted by the literary critic as a transformation of a prior account which in the canonical text is now visible, if faintly. From the perspective of the historian of ideas, it is the marginal voice that is the original, and the dominant voice which is secondary. For a feminist exegete, there is much of interest in the process by which the one account has been, one might say, 'cannibalized' by the other. In the prior story the heavenly beings are captivated by the beauty of the human females, whom they either take to wife or rape, and whose unnatural offspring wreak havoc on the earth. Sin begins in the heavenly world, in which no hint of femininity is present. (Perhaps, indeed, the myth borrows from the experience of all-male societies—soldiers, hunters, traders—when confronted with females.) The earth is a place of primordial innocence, invaded from outside. Indeed, the earth being ravaged by blood and crying out to the heavens because of violence, is surely a female image. A disordered male heaven violates a female earth.

What is so unsatisfactory, and yet so powerful about this myth that a writer should seek to replace it, while yet retaining its

structure? Evil, in the biblical story, originates on the earth, and with humans. The heavenly world is not the origin of disorder but quite the opposite: the divine law concerning the tree of knowledge is the authority of the father, disobedience to whom brings about punishment and alienation from the earth, which is, however, no longer a female but simply a created object. From it humans are made and to it they will return; that is the whisper that is left of the idea of mother earth. The woman, far from being an innocent victim of male possession, is depicted as a gullible but also wilful agent in the act of disobedience. She is amenable to sweet-talking from another male (a clever snake in this case) and uses her female role as food-giver to her mate to bring about a curse on both of them. The man who listens to his woman is a fool and deserves his punishment, especially if he seeks to blame her (though this has not prevented subsequent generations of male theologians from repeating Adam's wimpish complaint that the trouble with men is women). If women, however, emerge as the main losers in the transformation of the story, who is the winner? Clearly a single male deity, known as YHWH (or simply 'God' to many), whose nature is such that it cannot mix with human nature (*pace* the New Testament), and from whose domain, which he rules as monarch, no possibility of evil can emerge. The retelling of the story is the outcome of a demand from a strict form of patriarchal monotheism, of the kind whose emergence we cannot date exactly, but which is not as old as many scholars like to maintain (see Hayman 1991 and Barker 1992).

It is certainly legitimate to attempt to set the emergence of this new myth in the context of the status of women in the household and in society generally. Such attempts may in the end produce only hypothetical arguments. But the task of treating such stories from a sociological or historical point of view has the effect of relativizing them, of making them appear to be determined by other factors, of depriving them of the kind of absolute authority they have by virtue of their canonical status. The biblical story of the origins of sin and of human nature has tended to blame women at the expense of a patriarchal deity, though it is true to say that the interpretation of that story has taken the process further than even the story itself.

This last point brings into play an important factor, namely the *use* of the biblical myth. In the story of the descent, punishment fell upon the rebel leader, to whom, if Leviticus 16 can be applied to the interpretation, human offences against the deity could be ritually transferred, so that the punishment for human sin would fall upon the one who is responsible. In the biblical story the acceptance by the deity of Noah's sacrifice, and also his recognition that humans would have evil thoughts, permits a system in which humans are responsible for their own wicked nature, but divine indulgence is possible when sacrifice is offered. In the Christian tradition that myth has been extended by the story of a descent from the heavenly world of a 'son of God' who reverses the pattern of the original descent myth by suffering violence, and offers, instead of Azazel, a means for humans to avoid the due punishment for their own sins. It is open to speculation that the New Testament story of an incarnated heavenly saviour owes its formulation as much to the myth of the heavenly descent of the 'sons of God' which early Christians could have read (and surely did) in the books of *1 Enoch* and of *Jubilees* (where it is also to be found). Read from this point of view, the mixing of divine and human natures is no startling innovation, Jesus is no second Adam, but an anti-Azazel,[1] and Mary is no second Eve. The role of Mary as virgin and mother surely owes more to non-Christian goddesses and to the projections of male fantasies than to the biblical myth. By the use of critical literary strategies and historical argumentation there is every scope for a positive feminist reading of the canonical myth(s), though the limits have to be frankly recognized. To place females in the biblical heaven, other techniques will have to be used, such as the fairly clear archaeological evidence that the now Christian God was not always a single parent.[2]

1. The correspondences between the Passion and the scapegoat ceremony are too often under-utilized. A reading of the Mishnaic account of the ceremony (*m. Yoma*) together with the Synoptic Passion narrative is instructive.

2. Texts such as those from *Kuntillet 'Ajrud* and *Khirbet el-Qom*, (see conveniently Davies 1991: 81, [nos. 8.017 and 8.021], 107 [no. 25.003]), now attest for Palestine what was previously known to be the case in Elephantine.

Part II

Emblems of Motherhood

FEMALE SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR: TWO DESCRIPTIVE PATTERNS WITHIN THE 'BIRTH OF THE HERO' PARADIGM*

Athalya Brenner

I

The 'birth of the hero' myth, or paradigm, is a well-known and widely used model. As defined by Rank (1964), Campbell (1933), Dundes (1965) and others, it is a widespread literary (be it oral or written) pattern which tells how a hero is born despite many hardships and how he spends his early formative years. The difficult circumstances attending the birth and childhood stories serve, of course, to enhance the miraculous elements of the fact that the future hero manages to attain maturity: the more severe the circumstances described, the more impressive the results. The birth stories of Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Samson and others all belong to the same category or literary paradigm. Each particular instance may contain all the themes that make up the complete literary structure or only some of those pertinent to the structure of the genre and its message.

The 'birth of the hero' myth is obviously not a unique pattern exclusive to biblical literature. The myth is an almost universal one which crops up in chronologically and geographically disparate cultures, while common themes link its various manifestations together; and dissimilarities accentuate differences of origin and cultural circumstances. The birth stories of Sargon the Great or King Oedipus are as legitimate members of the genre as the birth story of Moses—with individual differences, of course. However, the recurrent appearance of this type of

* Reprinted from *VT* 36/3 (1986): 257-73.

story, albeit with modifications, is indicative of the popularity of the genre in Hebrew tradition. In time, such stories undoubtedly came to influence one another and to exhibit similarities that may have originated from a process of ever-increasing mutual dependance as much as ultimate common provenance. Thus, an exchange of individual features or correspondent themes between biblical members of the category appears to have been understandable, even inevitable.

A short summary of the full paradigm—which, I stress again, need not be manifest *in toto* in any particular occurrence of it—would run as follows. A woman, preferably of noble origin, is barren until quite an advanced age. Variations on the theme are possible, as long as they deal with pre-conception difficulties. The woman (and sometimes the prospective father) has a divine revelation in which the future birth is announced, and sometimes the son's fate in early or later years is alluded to. The ensuing response of the recipients varies according to personal temperament from unquestioning acceptance to incredulity and to attempts to influence the future by various means. In due course the child is born, and manages to attain maturity and fulfil his destiny despite dangers which would have demolished a lesser mortal. In this article I propose to deal with the cluster of sub-themes, all subordinate to the central motif of the hardships which enhance the improbability of the hero's birth and childhood, that are connected with the figure of the hero's mother. Henceforth I shall attempt to describe and classify the segment in which the mother features in individual biblical birth stories, and to relate my findings to the didactic message that these stories contain concerning female social behaviour.

The biblical stories can be categorized under two paradigmatic headings, each of which can be sub-divided in turn into two distinct types.

(1) The story involves two mothers rather than one. In this case, two possibilities emerge:

a. At least two heroes are born, so to speak. Necessarily, then, one of the newborn children (usually the first) or more will prove to be a 'false' hero; and only one, as

time will tell, will become the 'real' hero who carries the divine promise (see below).

b. Two mothers (or even three) will produce, between them, one hero (Naomi and Ruth; Moses' biological mother, his sister, and the daughter of the Pharaoh who becomes his adoptive mother).

(2) In stories where only one prospective mother features, two sub-models are in evidence:

a. A single mother has two sons, or more (Eve, Rebekah).
b. A single mother has one son (Samson's mother).

My discussion will concentrate on types 1a and 1b. A few remarks will be made about 2a, while 2b lies outside the scope of the present investigation.

The arrangement of mothers-to-be in complementary pairs (types 1a and 1b) merits special consideration for its literary as well as its social significance. I have mentioned that, where this device is employed, two mothers appear instead of one; and it follows that, if more than one heir apparent/future hero is produced, a process of elimination will take place. Only one mother will be the 'real' mother of the 'real' hero, only one offspring will be the person whose birth and subsequent career the particular narrative celebrates.

II

Sarah and Hagar, Leah and Rachel and Bilhah and Zilpah, Hannah and Peninnah are paired-off women who, in each case, are married to or live under the legal protection of the same male. This literary state of affairs undoubtedly reflects a certain social background. The women discussed (if the stories about them represent historical conditions, not to mention actual historical figures) are described as living within a patriarchal-polygamous society, with all the traditional domestic difficulties that such a situation entails for the persons involved. However, it would be a mistake to let the matter stand here. The attitudes attributed to the members of each female pair, even their arrangement and description as such a pair, are reminiscent of

one another. They are depicted as individual manifestations of the same model of behaviour, conventionalized stereotypes whose conduct is predictable from the fact that they are female. Any two paired-off women of my 1a category are always defined as two rivals who are interlinked by family ties and interlocked in social combat, as if no alternative pattern of social behaviour is conceivable for them in such a situation. In each and every case the conflict between the two is described as so ingrained as to exclude any possibility of a permanent peaceful resolution. The only satisfactory conclusion for the competition, according to the relevant narratives, is either the demise (Rachel) or the expulsion (Hagar) of one of the participants. From the point of view of the ultimate outcome, then, the competition is truly deadly or, to say the least, highly destructive.

All the 1a paradigmatic pairs are bound tightly together in many ways, so much so that no single member of a given pair is a full personality in her own right but just a psychological segment. The two women complement each other: viewed together, as parts of one single entity, they might constitute a satisfactory image of one person. Another way of defining this literary device is to describe it in terms of a juxtaposition: one woman is the 'real' figure, in the sense that she is the future hero's mother, and her opposite number is a shadow figure or reflection. Who represents the substance and who embodies false aspirations, however, becomes apparent as the story unfolds. Despite certain clues, the link between the females is so pronounced as to exclude an easy solution. Thus, the internal tension of the plot is maintained and even further increased.

Let us take a look at Sarah and Hagar (Gen. 16 and 21). They are different in many ways and stand opposite each other, like a figure and its mirrored image. Sarah is socially superior within the family structure and beyond it; she is a free woman who has jurisdiction over her own property and is a sole wife to her husband. Hagar is a slave who is directly subordinate to Sarah, and her status vis-à-vis Abraham is non-existent, as the story shows: even when she is given to Abraham for the purpose of producing a son, she is ultimately answerable to her mistress (16.6). Hence, she does not even enjoy the comparatively

inferior, albeit legally binding status of a concubine. In addition, Sarah originally comes from Abraham's immediate kin (Gen. 11.26-30) and perhaps enjoys the higher status of an adopted sister (chs. 12 and 20; and cf. E.A. Speiser's commentary [1964: 78-9, 149-50] for these passages). Hagar, in contradistinction, is a foreigner from Egypt (16.1), which makes her position within the household lowlier still. Sarah's exceptional beauty is referred to beforehand (12.11), while silence is maintained on the question of Hagar's looks. Sarah enjoys her husband's steadfast love, while his attitude towards Hagar does not extend beyond natural kindness. On the other hand, Sarah is old while Hagar is presumably younger; Sarah has been barren for many married years, while Hagar conceives shortly after she has been loaned to Abraham for that purpose (16.3-4).

The two women apparently share one overriding ambition: to supply a son and heir to their master, either by biological means (Hagar) or else, if that fails, by adoptive means (Sarah). One would expect them to co-operate despite their differences, for they share a basic *raison d'être*. However, this is hardly the case. They do not get along. Both are equally to blame: Sarah for making her slave's life a misery (16.6) and, finally, for bringing about the latter's expulsion from the household (21.10); and Hagar for trying to use her pregnancy to ameliorate her position at the expense of her mistress (16.4), and for attempting to run away after having been provoked (16.6). Neither of them is satisfied with her lot, in spite of the fact that each has what the other lacks. Furthermore, although their whole being is wrapped up in the production of a male heir, the eventual fulfilment of this ambition is apparently not sufficient. No truce is effected after Hagar gives birth. Sarah, in contrast to her previously declared intention, goes back on her word and does not treat the child as her 'adopted' offspring. When her own son is born, against great odds and according to the divine promise, she does not rest until Hagar and her son (Abraham's son) are sent away. Now she is busy ensuring her son's inheritance rights: nothing is good enough for him but an exclusive claim (ch. 21). The inevitable culmination of her activity is that the family is broken up. It is true that God declares that this elimination of Ishmael from the inner family circle fits in with his

design (21.12-13). Nevertheless, this causes the family unit (not to mention Abraham himself) considerable suffering. In addition, a precedent is set for the future behaviour of the two women's descendants: they will be as hostile towards one another as their mothers have been. The rift caused by the maternal inability to co-operate in the name of family interests thus has far-reaching consequences.

Leah and Rachel are presented as a pair of opposites as well (Gen. 29–31). Here the structure of the story is even more interesting than that of the previous one, for in each a handmaid is used—on one occasion or another—for the same purpose that Sarah has used Hagar. And again, the unfortunate husband does not have much say in the procedure but follows his wives' lead. Differences in details between the two stories are obvious. Nevertheless, the basic motifs—two women whose prime motivation is motherhood, who do not get along together, whose behavior is ultimately destructive and causes family friction and damage to themselves through continuing competition between their children—remain the same. The arrangement of the female characters in double pairs, dual mirror images of the female principles involved, serves to highlight several of the themes intrinsic to the paradigm as a whole (difficulty of conceiving the hero and of singling him out from his peers, future friction, female attitudes). On the whole, the double arrangement looks like an elaborated imitation of the Sarah–Hagar narratives. Structurally speaking, it does not matter whether in both cases the literary product reflects historical, practical reality or is fictitious. Neither the differences in individual depiction, nor the incompleteness of the analogy between the two cases (that is, only hints of the rivalry between the handmaids and their mistresses; no details of rivalry between the inferior women themselves, which could have produced an appropriate reflection of their mistresses' conduct) are structurally important. What matters is the literary fact that tradition and authors chose to present the history—real or otherwise—of the heroes' mothers in this case too in accordance with the lines described above.

Leah and Rachel are two sisters who are married to the same man. However, they are not equals. Again each has what the

other lacks, and none is satisfied with her lot in spite of her own advantages within the family hierarchy. Both have their own personal possessions (the handmaids). Leah's seniority is twofold and thus well established (like Sarah's): she is the elder sister who married Jacob first. Rachel is doubly inferior socially: she is younger, a second wife. Unlike Sarah, Leah is not beloved by her husband but is the fertile one. By contrast, Rachel is the loved wife but remains barren for a long time. Let us note in passing that the distribution of sub-themes and sub-motifs varies from one story to the other, but the basic material remains stable. Thus Rachel tries to overcome her biological disability by producing an adoptive son through her handmaid Bilhah (30.3-8). Leah, whose own fertility has now temporarily failed, follows suit (vv. 9-13). Like Hagar, the slaves belong to the official wives: they are not consulted about their fate and have to obey their mistresses' orders. They do not marry the husband, and Jacob himself complies with his wives' plans without an audible murmur. The result of all this feverish heir-oriented activity benefits the family unit at first: many male children are produced. One would assume that the eight sons will bring about a truce of sorts between the sisters, for at this juncture Leah has four biological sons and two adoptive ones, and Rachel has two adoptive sons. However, this is not the case. Leah 'hires' Jacob from Rachel (note that Jacob agrees to this arrangement made in his absence) not for love, but with the required result in mind; and eventually gives birth to two additional sons and one daughter (30.14-21). As for Rachel, she finally has Joseph (vv. 22-24). As his very name implies, her ambition does not rest there. It is ironical that Rachel, who has previously declared that she will die if she has no children (30.1) and is not satisfied with the legal and biological children born later, dies precisely while trying to produce yet another child (35.16-19). The child lives, but Rachel pays dearly for her continuing fight with her sister.

The two mothers-sisters together form one split image whose ambitions and behaviour are characterized by a common concern. Despite that, they enjoy no intimacy but, instead, quarrel and bicker incessantly. Only once do they co-operate: when they feel that Laban has robbed their children of their

rightful inheritance they act with their husband against their father (ch. 31). The temporary alliance is effected by what they conceive of as external danger—again, to their children. It is no wonder that the latter eventually follow in their mothers' footsteps. There is hatred and intrigue among them, and the domestic power politics in which they all continue to indulge leads to the long sojourn in Egypt, with all the sorrows and hardships that period entails for the community and for individuals within it. Once again, I stress that the whole process fits in—according to biblical writers and editors—with the divine plan for the Children of Israel. Future heroes are duly born and raised. They attain their destinies despite initial difficulties, of which many are linked not only to maternal disability (barrenness) but also to maternal conduct within the family unit. The success in overcoming these and other problems of survival serves, within the framework of the individual mythic paradigm as well as the combined plan of the continuous biblical narrative, to accentuate sharply the impact of what has come to pass and to strengthen faith in the God who has pre-destined the whole process. Nevertheless, one is left with the impression that the mothers' conduct leaves much to be desired.

A similar paradigm, albeit of a shortened and less detailed format, is found at the beginning of Samuel's birth story (1 Sam. 1). Peninnah and Hannah are married to Elkanah. Peninnah is fertile and has children; Hannah is barren. Hence, Peninnah taunts Hannah. On the other hand, the latter is beloved by her husband, and her position within the household probably reflects her husband's affection. Nevertheless, Hannah is not satisfied. Her husband's contention that his love for her is worth more than ten sons (v. 8) is silently but tearfully rejected as invalid. Symptomatically for this type of narrative, the future hero is not one of the more fertile wife's sons, but the offspring of the beloved and previously barren one. This is similar to the story of Sarah and Hagar, although in the case of Jacob's wives the situation is slightly different: the two mothers produce between them more than one significant future hero (Judah, Levi, Joseph, Benjamin), which moves family strife into future generations until it ultimately blossoms into inter-tribal and national conflicts.

III

What do type 1a narratives teach us about the social role of heroes' mothers, and how do these reports of the women's conduct evaluate their performance within the social niche allegedly assigned to them by the framework of their own society? In other words, what are the socio-psychological characteristics attributed to the hero's mother type within the paradigmatic model of the hero's birth story?

The chief aspiration which informs these women's being, as delineated by the narratives, is biological motherhood and its benefits. Such motivation should be distinguished from so-called natural maternal love or wifely affection. We have seen that even biological motherhood is not sufficient, and that the fight to ensure the economic status of the son assumes central place after his birth. Therefore, the conduct of the women involved should be judged as—and apparently is intended to be judged as—an act born out of calculations of power politics rather than mere emotion or similar consideration. Further, the respective husbands (be they Abraham, Jacob or Elkanah) do not count for much either from the romantic or from any other angle. They are pawns in their wives' deadly serious game of producing heirs and organizing family finance. And lest we err and think that the women's behaviour advances the situation of the family as a whole, we have seen how time and time again their personal ambitions run counter to the supreme value of preserving the existing social order and protecting the boundaries and well-being of the family unit. They are described as noisy, quarrelsome, disruptive, irresponsible. They have been chosen to serve as vessels for carrying the divine promise, but their conduct proves them hardly worthy of their destiny. The fact that they put political ambition above the overriding concern of the community's survival brands them as socially maladjusted. The final judgment passed on these paired-off women (and I shall have to refer to the pairing-off notion again later) is that they do not understand the implications of their circumstances and fail to act wisely. The consequences—later strife and further divisions within family, community and nation—are thus

painfully foreshadowed. The continued welfare of the family is greatly compromised by their behaviour. Seen against the described background of the polygamous-patriarchal family to which they belong, newly arrived in the land and unsure of its existence, this is a serious criticism indeed.

Let us note that, by and large, males in situations of stress and possible conflict are not judged so harshly. Abraham and Lot manage to part company in peace, despite the economic competition within the family unit (Gen. 13). David and Jonathan keep their friendship despite their political rivalry. Are we to conclude that men are capable of true friendship and mutually helpful cooperation, not to mention love, even under stress and when personal survival is at stake, whereas women by definition, even when they are great women chosen to conceive heroes and leaders, are incapable of generous and wise conduct, not to mention compassion for their colleagues and competitors? Even biological sisters, it seems, fall victim to their personal ambitions and forget their common origin, although in a manner completely different from male sibling rivalry (and see below, VII, for type 2a).

IV

Type 1b of the segment that deals with the hero's mother within the 'birth of the hero' paradigm displays structural similarities as well as dissimilarities to its predecessor. The structural variation perforce signifies and entails a variation in plot sequence but also, which is much more important for our investigation, is extended to matters of views concerning the evaluation of the female psyche and social conduct.

Essentially, the paired-off model—two mothers rather than one—is retained in this category too. Therefore, this type of narrative is here classified as a sub-category of paradigm 1, together with 1a. However, only one son and heir is produced according to this structure. Other features that are characteristic of 1a but undergo an alteration in 1b are, for instance, the lack of a divine vision or promise and a further minimization of the biological father's role in the latter. In one of the two cases classified under this heading we even witness an expansion of

the basic pair model into three maternal figures, which must have some significance for that particular story as a whole. The main change, however, is the high degree of responsible co-operation attributed to the women involved in each case.

Naomi and Ruth are not married to the same person but, again, they form a pair along the general principles of the 1a paradigm. The beginning of the book of Ruth (ch. 1) makes this immediately clear. Naomi is the senior partner: she is older, and the mother-in-law. Ruth is the inferior member of the pair: she is younger and subordinate, by status as well as by will, to Naomi (Sasson 1989: 123-24). The structural analogy to the Sarah–Hagar story is further apparent in that Naomi is a native of Bethlehem, while Ruth is a foreigner and thus doubly inferior. In another respect, though, the situation is reversed: Ruth, as implied by the narrative itself and elaborated in later Jewish tradition (Levine 1973), is the one endowed with the good looks. Both share the major traits of childlessness: Naomi has lost her sons (1.5), while Ruth remains barren until a relatively advanced age. An additional handicap from which they both suffer is lack of husbands, which makes the eventuality of the hero's birth even more remote. On the surface, the story contains conditions which have previously (in type 1a narratives) led to friction and competition between the mothers. Even more so: if only one child is to be born, what is more 'natural' than a tug-of-war between the two mother figures concerning ownership and its attendant fringe benefits? Nevertheless, and although the question of motherhood is presented in the text in a somewhat ambiguous fashion,[1] this does not occur. When Ruth finally marries, after much planning and manipulative action initiated by Naomi, she actually relinquishes her maternal status in favour of her mother-in-law (ch. 4). For all intents and purposes the biological mother, in contradistinction to previous behaviour patterns, in fact gives in to the adoptive(?)[2] mother (4.17)—and willingly so. The reason given by the text for Ruth's generosity is her love for Naomi, which makes her more

1. So in Ruth, where it is far from clear whose son the infant really is, Naomi's or Ruth's; and see below.

2. Cf. Brenner 1983.

valuable for Naomi than any number of male sons (4.14-15). It is Ruth's love which preserves the two women together, feeds them and ultimately resolves the problem of their sad plight through the production of a male heir.

The similarities in motifs and themes to those of the 1a model are quite obvious. However, the basic difference in the evaluation of potential and actual female conduct exemplified in Ruth's character—which changes the entire psycho-social moral of the story so far as its chief female actors are concerned—is not sufficiently explained merely by their not being married to the same person. We have seen that the male figure, even in the 1a type, is hardly the target of the competition: he is secondary in relation to the main object of giving birth to a son. The same central theme is present here too, and could have led to bitter strife in this instance also. If this does not happen it is, as the story itself stresses, because of Ruth's generous and unselfish behaviour. This makes co-operation between the two women viable, and ultimately saves both—and the family line—from extinction. Thus, through the abolition of supposedly conventional female behaviour patterns, a new hero is born. And a greater prize is still in store: a descendant of the latter, King David, will turn out to be a super-hero who changes the course of Israelite history.

The story of the birth of Moses (Exod. 2.1-10) belongs, so far as its deep structure is concerned, to the same 1b sub-class of the hero's birth genre. Deviations from the stories previously discussed abound, but most of them should be regarded as relating to the individual plot rather than the structural-generic level. For instance, the central motif which deals with the many hardships linked with the hero's birth and early childhood is retained, but assumes a new form. The recurrent sub-themes of maternal barrenness (1a, 1b) and friction (1a) are dropped in favour of another: external danger to the future hero from the father's (biological or adoptive) side.[1] The structural function of the latter sub-theme, however, is parallel to that of the former:

1. Pharaoh automatically, if not formally, becomes Moses' adoptive father, for his daughter assumes responsibility for the baby's fate and raises him in her father's house.

both illuminate the same facet of the hero's fate. A few items that we have already encountered within this type of story, such as details concerning the outward appearance of the participants, are dropped altogether. Social data defining the status of the female figures are kept to the bare minimum, and we notice that some characteristics are inverted: for instance, the foreign lady's status is not a handicap (as in the other stories) but an asset. The characters have no names, and their emotions are hardly elaborated upon. All these are variations which are anchored in the provenance and individual nature of this particular paradigm. The difference lies, nonetheless, in the introduction of three maternal figures instead of two (and two father figures—Moses' biological father, and the hostile Pharaoh in whose house the child grows up safely—instead of one paternal figure; however, this last feature lies outside the scope of the present inquiry).[1]

Three anonymous women co-operate in order to ensure Moses' welfare. One is the biological mother (daughter of Levi), the other the adoptive mother (the daughter of Pharaoh; and note the symmetry in familial status and the adjectival modifiers denoting them which are applied to each of the two women). So far, the paradigm is similar to that found in the book of Ruth: the first woman actually relinquishes her rights and claims concerning the infant in favour of the second—something that, in the present case, advances the child's chances of survival and the eventual fulfilment of his destiny. These two would have made a paired-off arrangement not dissimilar in initial structure to that of Ruth and Naomi. However, a third figure is introduced early on (Exod. 2.4). Like the other two, she too is defined as being a daughter, this time the presumably mature

1. There can hardly be any doubt that the father figure of Pharaoh is psychologically ambivalent. The contiguity of the preceding biblical story (Exod. 1) identifies him as the Pharaoh who conspired to get rid of all Hebrew male infants, hence he is the ultimate source for the initial dangers to Moses. On the other hand, his is the house in which Moses grows up securely until he is ready to achieve his destiny. This Pharaoh embodies both protection and threat, like any father figure; and Moses' eventual rebellion against him strengthens his function as such even further.

daughter of the biological mother; and she is assigned the role of a go-between who links the real and surrogate mothers together (vv. 7, 8). It seems, therefore, that Moses' birth story is a variation, or an expansion, of the 1b literary model exemplified in the biblical story of Ruth and Naomi. The basic structure of the latter still informs the former, but a third figure is inserted to mediate between the two females. The result for the child is beneficial: as a result of the three women's concerted efforts he manages to survive. The biological mother demonstrates, by implication, how a 'real' woman should behave: she gives up her child in order to have him (and cf. the Judgment of Solomon, 1 Kgs 3.16-28). In other words, she is well-adjusted enough to put the baby's welfare above her own wishes—unlike Sarah, Jacob's wives and their handmaids (type 1a). Incidentally, of course, all this fuss around the child enhances the tension; and the listener or reader gradually realizes that only a very special child deserves such devotion and care.

V

A combined structural variation of the 1a (two paired-off mothers and two infants) and 1b (two mothers and one infant) paradigms underlies the Lukan narrative of the birth of Jesus (Lk. 1.8–2.7). Here motifs and themes from both narrative subclasses are joined together to produce a new tradition of a super-hero's birth.

The general social background is, again, patriarchal; although, in this case, it is monogamous rather than polygamous (1a). Hardships which enhance the improbability of the child's eventual birth are many: barrenness of the woman and advanced age of both parents in the case of Elizabeth and her husband; Mary's social difficulties, emanating from the special circumstances of the conception and her betrothed status. The two women receive divine revelations which anticipate the births (as in the 1a, and unlike the 1b, traditions). They could well have been presented as rivals, for a number of features point to their being a contrasted pair. They differ in age, place of origin, social standing, and probably beauty too. They are kinswomen (Lk. 1.36), which may be another potential reason

for contention between mothers-to-be and future sons alike. Once more, as in the Naomi/Ruth story, one is an older woman and one a younger one; and the generation conflict is resolved without competition. This time, however, the elder and superior member of the pair acknowledges the superiority of the younger: Elizabeth readily admits that Mary's son will be greater than hers (1.39-35), in contradistinction to the type 1a behavioural patterns displayed by heroes' mothers. This is a new development, a sublimation of older themes and motifs. Faith triumphs, as it should, over personal ambition and ensures not only the peaceful survival of a divinely ordained human condition but also, through the birth of the two heroes (John and Jesus), the evolution of a new socio-religious era. The paired-off unit of the two women is reconciled and mutually supportive: they practise understanding rather than hostility, adjustment to their personal role in history rather than selfishly motivated strife. This, in its turn, informs and anticipates the lives and fates of their respective sons by eliminating the possibility of future power struggles between the heroes-to-be and by promoting co-operation instead.

A few elements are shared by type 1b and the combined-feature story of Elizabeth and Mary. These include factors of omission as well as items of contents and matters of world-view that appear to be different from corresponding items in the type 1a narratives. An interesting feature is the minimization of the father's role which is, perhaps, more characteristic of the stories of Naomi/Ruth and Moses than of the story of Elizabeth and Mary.[1] Another item is relevant to the Naomi/Ruth and Elizabeth/Mary pairs: both are portrayed as female couples of strong, distinct personalities, unlike the somewhat flat and single-dimension characters of the 1a paradigm.[2] The last point is, again, the different view of female adjustability to her social role as a mother and overseer of family survival which is

1. Zacharias and Joseph play a much bigger role in their stories than Abraham and Jacob do in their sons' birth accounts, but even the former characters play a role that is secondary to that of their womenfolk.

2. Those, as we remember, are incapable of basic human emotions such as love, affection, humility and a well-developed sense of personal security.

expressed, implicitly or explicitly, in each narrative structural model. For the time being, let us keep these differences in mind. I shall come back to them, and to their possible significance, after I have made some comments on the 2a (one mother, two sons) paradigm.

VI

In some stories of the birth of the hero only one mother is featured. The idea of conflict, through which the 'real' hero identifies himself as such while the 'false' hero is exposed for what he really stands for, is presented through the prism of sibling rivalry between two blood brothers (preferably twins). This arrangement (2a), whether it reflects so-called 'historical' facts or not, contains a paired-off entity that is structurally different from the literary device that I have named 'paired-off women' (1a, 1b). Both literary models share a few motivating features which underline them, such as a universally recognized psychological factor accounting for strife and competition within a certain family, and a narrational or pseudo-historical explanation for the continuing friction and consequent dispersion of the family unit (as in 1a). Nevertheless, it is basically unlike either of the literary paradigms mentioned above. The rivalry is never resolved until one of the two 'heroes' is disposed of this way or the other (rather like 1a, but unlike the harmonious behaviour achieved by the women in 1b). The competitive factions are now male figures. These, unlike their female counterparts of the paired-off traditions, form a truly contradictory split image: one is (at least relatively) a positive character, while the other is a totally negative figure. Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau are not complementary pairs (like the women in 1a, 1b), but opposite manifestations of qualitative moral values. Here the picture obtained from the description is in the tradition of the psycho-moralistic schism between good and evil, Eve and Lilith, God and the Satan. The judgment delivered on one member of the pair, and the relative exoneration of the other, are much more severe and decisive than those meted out to both members of the 1a type pairs. Naturally, this kind of moral judgment is dissimilar to the praise reserved for the harmony

achieved out of contradiction by the 1b type women. Thus, within various versions of the hero's birth myth, as it was adapted for explaining processes of divine elimination and selection, two solutions are offered for the problem of inter-family strife and for the psychological, emotional and social factors which underlie it.

VII

Let us return to the 1a and 1b types. In Genesis and 1 Samuel the paired-off women destined to be heroes' mothers are depicted as maladjusted to their social role, for they are unable to conform to family needs. Outside these sources, women described as pairs within a related paradigm are different: they are capable of correct social attitudes and social behaviour rightly dictated by family priorities. These are diametrically opposed views of female social functioning, with more than a hint of male criticism for the Great Matriarchs of the 1a type. Such criticism is not to be regarded as a trifling matter. The implied attribution of female maladjustment should be understood as referring to an allegedly serious failing. As new-comers and foreigners, all members of the founding Hebrew families were required to place the supreme value of communal survival above personal needs. Whoever chose to prefer personal aspirations put the future of the group into jeopardy, which makes God's saving grace in nurturing the community and keeping his promise even more impressive, but does not absolve the social offenders. On the other hand, the type of paired-off women who behaved as was expected of them (1b) and helped to advance the divine design at the expense of their personal (unmentioned) needs, were lavishly praised for their deeds.

Why are some women (1a) implicitly or explicitly depicted as stereotypes (non-individualized manifestations) of social maladjustment, while others (1b) are recognized as capable of selfless and thus correct social conduct? The obvious answer would be to attribute the negative view to the marital status of the 1a women: is it not natural for co-wives to fight over their own and their offspring's destinies, especially since they presumably love the same male? I have already tried to

demonstrate that this is too simple a solution. The struggle between the women is a regular power struggle, unaffected by love inasmuch as it is centered round motherhood and its attendant benefits.

Did later generations and more developed literary tastes come to view the female psyche more leniently, for the stories depicting female behaviour favourably belong to an era later than that in which the 1a traditions were being formed? Such an ideological change—if this it is—was hardly likely to have happened where and when there is no indication of a general social change which would have promoted a more favourable view of the 'other' sex: the background, throughout the biblical period, remains patriarchal (although not necessarily monogamous). We might try to say that the New Testament deals with the beginnings of a pioneering society, where women are often accorded a better standing as valuable members. This too is an insufficient answer: it may explain the positive attitudes attributed to Elizabeth and Mary, but not the literary subtype as a whole.

A third, more speculative, reflection would lead us to assume that whereas type 1a is a male-oriented, male-written judgment on female sociability and potential of socialization, type 1b is female oriented in the sense that it originated in female circles which tended to view their own species in a different light. Such a claim is partially supported by two features of the 1b paradigm mentioned above: the women are obviously seen as strong and constant characters; and the male role is kept to a skeletal minimum. Showing female authorship for all three stories which belong to this category—Exodus 2, Ruth and Lk. 1.1–2.7—would have been quite to my personal taste. However, this is a task for the future; and here we should let the matter rest, and regrettably so.[1]

1. An earlier and partial version of this article was read in the SBL meeting in Strasbourg (August 1984). I owe the last two parts, as well as numerous other points, to questions and insights offered by colleagues during the discussion period that followed.

SARAI'S EXILE:
A GENDER-MOTIVATED READING OF GENESIS 12.10–13.2*

Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes

When I was getting ready to write this essay the documentary film 'You Can't Run Away' appeared on television in the Netherlands. This documentary illustrates the traffic in women from the Far East on the basis of the history, or, rather, the herstory, of two Filipino women. The most gripping scene is the one in which one of the two women reports how she had in vain tried to escape her fate. Impressed by the promises made by a nice, decent Dutch gentleman, she had decided to leave her country and to join him in the Netherlands in order to start working there as a receptionist. The gentleman assured her that soon she would earn enough money to let her children come as well and, in this way, she would be able to offer them a better future. Reality, however, turned out to be different. Immediately after their arrival in the Netherlands the 'decent' gentleman drove her to his sex-farm in Friesland (a remote, northern part of the Netherlands). There he explained to her what sort of activities he was expecting her to perform from now on. Frightened to death, she nevertheless offered resistance, but he tore off her clothes. Overcome by panic, she ran outside and cried for help. But the only living soul she saw in the neighbourhood of the farm was a drunkard. This frightened her even more and, at that moment, she realized how absolutely powerless she was. The only choice she had was to go back to the farm and to deliver herself up to her 'protector'. 'You can't run away'.

* A Dutch version of this essay was published in a volume edited by the Department of Old Testament, Faculty of Theology, State University Utrecht (Becking and Smelik 1989).

Indeed, it is impossible to escape your fate in a country where you do not know anybody, where you do not speak the language, and where your identity papers have been taken away.

The speechless loneliness to which this woman was condemned is characteristic of the situation of women who are victims of sexual violence. This situation is characterized by speechlessness because the *experience* of sexual violence is unspeakable. The pain and humiliation caused by sexual violence cannot be expressed in words. Apart from that, the dominant culture represses the experience of sexual violence (Bal 1988c).[1] Women who have undergone this experience are muted. 'Now my sister, be silent', Absalom says to Tamar, who is wailing after having been raped by her half-brother Amnon (2 Sam. 13.20). The girl who finally musters up courage to speak to her pastor about the fact that she is repeatedly abused by her father is told that her imagination runs away with her. Her father has such a good reputation in the community/parish... (Imbens and Jonker 1985).[2] When asked whether anything uncommon had ever struck them during the medical checks of the women employed in the sex-farm, the doctor and his wife in the documentary 'You Can't Run Away' answer, 'No, we did not notice, nor did we see anything out of the ordinary'.

The experience of sexual violence is, as we have seen, not only unspeakable but was, until recently, a taboo subject of conversation. The victim's stories were, and often are, not heard. The dominant culture does not tolerate these stories. Hence it represses them by denying them, distancing itself from them, minimizing them, and/or by blaming the victim (Herman and Hirschman 1981).[3] And as long as the situation is like this,

1. Bal 1988c. In this study of 'Sexual Violence Brought into Culture' (parts of which have appeared in English in Bal, 1991) different aspects of the speechlessness of rape-victims are discussed and cultural figurations of rape are analysed.

2. The volume edited by Imbens and Jonker (1985) contains, amongst other things, a number of interviews with victims of sexual violence committed within the family.

3. Herman and Hirschman discuss the mechanisms of repression, denial, distancing and blaming which have, for a long time, determined the attitude towards (victims of) sexual violence.

women who have fallen victim to sexual violence are banished to a foreign land; to a land in which they are condemned to speechlessness, because no ear is prepared to listen to their attempts to describe the unspeakable.

From this point of view, it is no wonder that in Genesis 12 Sarai does not say a word. This argument, however, can also be turned upside down. Just because in Genesis 12 Sarai does not open her mouth, and just because the narration is, in this respect, representative of the (literary) stories about sexual violence circulating in our culture, it is so difficult to break through the silence. Stories describing sexual violence from the victim's perspective are rarely available in our culture. How, then, would women be able to tell them (Christ 1980)?[1] The fact that more and more women nowadays muster up the courage to speak out, with the result that it has been revealed how frequently sexual violence occurs, we owe to the women's movement. In this movement women have created space in order to evoke their stories to speech. They are literally 'hearing one another to speech' (Morton 1974: 39),[2] that is, they are listening to one another in such a way that they finally find room to express themselves. The stories of terror that surface in this way enable us to read a text like that of Sarai in Egypt in an *imagining* and *identifying* manner (Bal 1988c). What I mean is reading in such a manner that one focuses on imagining the described situation and its implications for Sarai. The aim of such a way of reading is to contribute to a breaking away from current ideas about women, according to which women are merely objects. These ideas function not only as legitimation for

1. Christ offers a fascinating description of the relationship between (literary and religious) stories on the one hand, and the (im)possibility of articulating women's experience on the other hand. 'Women's stories have not been told. And without stories there is no articulation of experience' (p. 1).

2. 'Every liberation movement rises out of its bondage with a new speech on its lips. This has been so with women coming together, seeking to get in touch with their own stories and experiences which they have discovered welling up from within, from underneath, from out of their past, from out of their traditions rather than down from above... Women are literally hearing one another to speech' (p. 39).

all sorts of violence against women, they also contribute to the alienation of women from their own experience.

In the following analysis of Gen. 12.10–13.2 I shall put Sarai in the centre of attention. I shall examine what attitude towards Sarai is presented in the story, and try to imagine the view of Sarai herself. I want to add that I do not conceive of the story as a reflection of a historical event from Sarai's life. Rather, I consider it as a figuration of, and response to, the social and religious reality that brought it forth (Bal 1988a). The way Sarai is treated in Genesis 12 shows what sort of actions were *thinkable*—thus perhaps also possible or desirable—in the author's (or authors') perception of this particular story. From the fact that this story is a part of the Hebrew Bible, thus also of the Christian canon, we may deduce that the reading and the functioning of this text were, and are, considered of great importance. This evokes the following questions: whose F (female/feminine) or M (male/masculine) interests are served by the transmission of this particular story, and what is its intended effect?

My reading of the text is based on the application of a narratological model of analysis.[1] This model is eminently suitable for the analysis of the power relations presented in a text. It implies that a text is to be analysed on three levels. The first level concerns the distribution of speech. Who speaks? Who tells the story, and at which moments do speakers alternate with the (anonymous) narrator? The second level concerns the domain of vision, of focalization. Who sees? Which image of the (imaginary) reality is presented to us? From whose point of view? Through whose eyes do we read the story? The third level concerns the distribution of actions. Who acts? What relationships are there between the characters in the narrative, and the events in which they are involved? How do the characters relate to one another? (Bal 1985b).

1. The narratological theory and its method are explained in Bal 1985b. The view that stories can be conceived of as figurations of, and responses to, the social reality that brought them forth is accounted for extensively in Bal 1988a: 32-39.

'Say now: my Sister art thou'[1]

Stories, be they fictive or not, are always told from a specific point of view. In order to trace this we have to examine how a story is constructed, how its events are reported, and which roles the different actors play. And then it is important to make a distinction between the narrator's vision and that of the different characters. Of course, this distinction is but relative. It is the narrator (that is, the primary speaker *in* the text, to be distinguished as such from the actual author[s] of the text) who decides to which character s/he attributes or does not attribute a vision. Moreover, the narrator's vision penetrates into the view of the characters. From the development of the story we can then glean whether the different characters' visions are represented in an approving or in a disapproving manner. The structure of Gen. 12.10–13.2 can be outlined as follows:

A Introduction. Abram *goes down* to Egypt for *heavy* is the famine in the land (12.10).
B Abram speaks to Sarai (vv. 11-13).
C Arrival in Egypt; 'the woman' (i.e. Sarai) is seen and taken away; benefits are conferred on Abram (vv. 14-16).
X YHWH strikes Pharaoh because of *dbr* Sarai (v. 17).
B′ Pharaoh speaks to Abram (vv. 18-19).
C′ Departure from Egypt; Abram and Sarai are sent away (v. 20).
A′ Closure (which, at the same time, is the introduction of the following story). Abram *goes up*, away from Egypt, together with his wife and Lot, very *heavy* with livestock, with silver and with gold (13.1-2).

What is Sarai's position within the framework of the story thus outlined? How do the different characters see her and which vision of the narrator does this betray?

Sarai appears in our story for the first time in v. 11, where she, depicted by the narrator as 'Sarai his wife', is spoken to by Abram. At that moment she is on the border of Egypt, the country to which Abram has gone down in order to dwell there

1. Gen. 12.13a. Translations from the Hebrew Bible in this essay are mine.

as client (*lgwr*). The narrator has already introduced Sarai in the previous section. In Gen. 11.29-31 she is mentioned three times: as the woman who has been taken as a wife by Abram; the woman of whom it is then explicitly said that she was barren and had no child; and, finally, as Terach's daughter-in-law. Terach takes her with him, together with Abram and Lot, away from Ur of the Chaldees to Haran. After he is called by YHWH, Abram takes Sarai and Lot with him to Canaan (Gen. 12.5). From Gen. 12.1-9 we can glean that the narrator sympathizes with Abram. He is described as someone who does what YHWH has told him to do. This could be an indication that Abram's words to Sarai, and the vision thereby revealed, are described in an approving manner. What do Abram's words mean to Sarai?

> Behold now I know
> that you are a woman beautiful to *see*
> It will come to pass
> when the Egyptians will *see* you and say
> His wife is this one
> they will kill me and you they will preserve alive
> Say now my sister art thou
> that it might go well with me for the price of you
> and myself might live on account of you (vv. 11-13).

The expressions 'behold now/please' and 'say now/please' indicate that Abram's speech to Sarai can be characterized as an urgent request. Before he expresses his proper request, Abram makes an urgent appeal to Sarai to take over his view of the situation. First of all he points out to her that, for a long time, he has known how beautiful she is. In this situation Abram's praise of Sarai's beauty is, however, not an utterance of joy which might evoke a similar reaction from Sarai. It is not the introduction of a dialogue between lovers (like, for instance Song 1.15-16), but a statement of a potential risk. Abram imagines for himself and for Sarai what the Egyptians will undoubtedly do as soon as they have seen how beautiful Sarai is. They will not stop at an admiring glance, but—and here Abram 'quotes' their words—they will immediately establish who is the beauty's owner: 'His wife is she'. Abram knows his male fellow-creatures well. They will consider him a rival, the proprietor of a desirable object: a woman whom they, after having seen her, will wish to

possess as well. Abram lets Sarai know that in that eventuality he will be powerless against them. He expresses the inevitable consequences by means of a chiasm: 'They will kill me and you they will preserve alive'. The contrast Abram sketches here is absolute. It creates the impression that the Egyptians' glance at Sarai's beauty exclusively endangers *his* life and not *hers*. He does not mention what sort of life it will be that the Egyptians will preserve her for. Does he leave this to Sarai's own imagination, or is he merely interested in his own fate?

That Abram's view of the Egyptians' behaviour is correct is confirmed in Exodus 1. The Pharaoh who appears in this chapter will 'repeat' Abram's words twice almost literally:

> If it is a son you shall kill him
> If it is a daughter she may live (vv. 16 and 22).

Too many foreign sons are considered a threat by this Pharaoh. As to foreign daughters, things are apparently different. Daughters can be 'taken', and so incorporated into one's own people. Sarai does not have any reason to entertain illusions about the life that, according to Abram, she will be spared for.

After his analysis of the situation, Abram addresses a request to Sarai. His formulation, however, is odd. The words 'Say now' evoke the expectation that he is going to 'quote', by direct speech, what Sarai will have to say, just as he quoted the Egyptians before. He does not express, however, the words that Sarai should say. Instead, he himself indicates how he wants to prevent the Egyptians from actually saying, 'His wife is she'. He does not want to be identified by this relationship to Sarai: 'Say now my sister art thou'. The narrator perhaps wants to show Abram's confusion by letting him speak like this. It is also possible that he wants to stress that Abram himself is fully responsible for the survival strategy that he outlines for himself here. In this manner the narrator prevents Sarai from appearing co-responsible for Abram's ruse.

The question of whether and to what extent Abram's ruse has to be condemned as a blameworthy patriarchal lie has occupied the minds of many commentators. The way this question is formulated, however, does not always show a correct understanding of Abram's situation. Being a refugee for economic

reasons, Abram finds himself in all but enviable circumstances. People who find—to their own cost—what powerlessness means, are very well aware of the fact that trickery often is the only, thus legitimate, option for survival. They sustain each other by telling stories about the inventiveness of their heroes and heroines. The Bible contains many examples of such 'minority literature'; see, for instance, the story about Tamar in Genesis 38, or the one about Ehud in Judges 3. Seen in this light, Abram's ruse acquires a nearly exemplary function. In Genesis 20, moreover, he is exonerated from the blame that his ruse is also a lie. In view of the critical situation he finds himself in, his behaviour cannot be equated with the sly acts of men who operate from a position of authority or power, such as, for instance, David's dealings with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11), or the manipulation of the Filipino woman by the sex-trafficker mentioned at the beginning of this essay.

What Abram's ruse means to Sarai, however, remains unanswered until now. What does Abram's re-naming of his relationship with her imply for her? What are the arguments he gives? His first argument aims at his own well-being or, rather, at his own prosperity. Therefore I have translated the preposition he uses here, and which can often be rendered 'on account of (you)', by 'for the price of you' (*b'bwrk*). This is the preposition's meaning in Amos 2.6 and 8.6 too. There the rich people are accused of selling the poor 'for the price of a pair of shoes'. My choice of attributing this meaning to the preposition here as well is justified by its context. Sarai's beauty, which would cost Abram his life in his capacity as her husband, can, and indeed will, yield him a profit in his capacity as her brother. To Sarai's ears the preposition used by Abram may sound like 'at the cost of you'.

Abram's second argument also focuses upon his own interest. He wants to save his own life 'on account of you' (*bgllk*). This preposition can also be found in Gen. 39.5, where it is stated that YHWH blessed the Egyptian's house 'on account of/for the sake of' Joseph. From Sarai's perspective we might hear this preposition here as 'thanks to you'. The question of whether Abram is only concerned about his own fate should now be answered in the affirmative. For Sarai his ruse means that he delivers her to

the covetous eyes of the Egyptians, as an object to be 'taken', for the sake of his own life and even prosperity. Here his behaviour is 'exemplary' too. It is comparable to that of other men who, as a matter of course, sacrifice their wives or their daughters to their own, or other men's, well-being in circumstances of distress. In Gen. 19.8 it is Lot who offers his daughters to the men from Sodom in order to spare his divine (male) guests. In Judg. 19.25 it is the Levite who hands over his wife to the men from Gibeah in order to safeguard his own life. Her body was broken and given to many (so Trible 1984: 64).[1]

Is it surprising that Sarai remains speechless, since Abram expects her to put her life at the service of his interests while he does not care for hers? In fact, does not Abram reveal that his view of Sarai does not differ from the Egyptians' view so feared by him?

'Because of dbr *Sarai'*

Having given Abram the opportunity to express himself like this, the narrator takes the floor again. His narration confirms Abram's view and intention to the hilt. Sarai, presented as nameless and referred to as 'the woman' in this part of the story, indeed appears as the defenceless object of the Egyptians' gaze. She is seen by everyone, from the lowest to the highest: first by the ordinary men in whose eyes she is 'very beautiful'; then by gentlemen from the higher circles, who sing her praises to Pharaoh: 'And the woman was taken away to Pharaoh's house' (v. 15b). Such is the simplicity of the case of a woman whose beauty was so dazzling that, at the drop of a hat she is appropriated by Pharaoh himself. Sarai is seen and taken away. That is the life spared for her. The profit this brings to Abram is not at all bad. Pharaoh rewards him 'for the price of her/at the cost of her': Abram's share of livestock, servants and riding-animals is increased. And there the story Abram related to Sarai and which, subsequently, has been converted by the Egyptians into a rapid, consecutive sequence of actions comes to an end.

1. Trible (1984) analyses four biblical narratives about (sexual) violent practices against women.

His ruse has been more than successful.

> YHWH stroke Pharaoh with great strokes and his house because of *dbr* Sarai Abram's wife (v. 17).

According to the structure of Gen. 12.10–13.2 (see above), this verse is the heart of the story. As we have seen, we can also view it as a new start. The story Abram had to tell has come to an end. Sarai, in silent loneliness, has been taken captive into Pharaoh's house. She has been bought and paid for. Her body has become the legal property of a new lord who is more powerful than the man who has declared her to be his sister. To those who read the story from Sarai's perspective Sarai, in her silent loneliness, embodies the fate of all those women who have fallen victim to the traffic in women which, even now, is widely practised. From the narrator's perspective, Sarai embodies the fate of the people of Israel in Egyptian slavery. This becomes clear in the way he describes YHWH's intervention. Just as, in the book of Exodus, YHWH strikes Pharaoh ten times for the liberation of the people of Israel, here he strikes Pharaoh and his house because of *dbr* Sarai, Abram's wife. In YHWH's eyes Sarai is still Abram's wife. This means that the situation created by Abram, and subsequently realized by Pharaoh, has to be undone.

The phrase *'l dbr* Sarai can be interpreted in several ways. The first option is to understand *dbr* and then translate it, 'on account of/because of Sarai'. In that case *dbr* has a juridical connotation. Injustice has been done to Sarai, and YHWH takes action as judge on her behalf. A second option is, 'because of the word/deed concerning Sarai'. In that case *dbr* points to Abram's *word-deed* (speech act) by which he, naming Sarai as his sister, has in fact terminated his marital relationship with her. This second option also points to the deed of Pharaoh, to whose house Sarai has been taken. A third option is, 'because of the word *of* Sarai'. This last translation/interpretation implies that YHWH is the only one towards whom Sarai does not remain speechless. We are not informed of the content of Sarai's word. Perhaps it is a scream, just like Tamar's in 2 Sam. 13.19;[1] or a

1. Tamar's story in 2 Sam. 13 is also discussed in van Dijk-Hemmes 1989c.

desperate cry for help, just like that of the Filipino woman, when she felt surrounded on all sides. Perhaps it is a prayer, like that in Psalm 22, 'My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?'; or a cry like that of the Israelites suffering from Egyptian slavery, 'And their cry for help went up to God on account of the compulsory service' (Exod. 2.23b).

The effect of this latter cry for help is that God remembers his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Similarly Sarai's history, which could have ended up a blind alley, starts again because YHWH interests himself in her welfare and because, one might say, he has been 'hearing her to speech'. Thus YHWH now reveals himself as Sarai's covenant partner. Abram, for his part, has not given evidence of remembering YHWH's blessing ever since arriving at the Egyptian border.

'Behold your Wife'

Just as Abram felt powerless against Pharaoh, so Pharaoh himself now feels powerless against YHWH. He sends for Abram and addresses him by means of a charge, and an order:

> What is this you have done to me
> Why did not you report to me
> that this one is your wife
> Why did you say
> My sister is this one
> that I took her unto myself as wife
> And now
> Behold your wife
> Take (her) and go (away) (vv. 18-19).

Like Abram's speech, Pharaoh's speech reveals how focused he is on his own interests. He holds Abram responsible for the plagues that have fallen upon him, and insists on his own innocence. The fact that Abram has passed off his wife as his sister does of course justify Pharaoh's taking her to himself as his wife. Sarai appears in his speech merely as the object by which he has been deceived. The injustice done to her remains totally outside his field of vision. As easily as Abram has converted his relationship with Sarai into a different one because her beauty has become too dangerous for him, so

Pharaoh now disposes of her once she has turned into an equally dangerous property. Sarai's word remains inaudible to him. That she might have a view of her own is unimaginable to him. She merely embodies the case between Abram and himself. 'Behold your wife. Take and go.'

Pharaoh's speech does not evoke an answer. This time it is Abram who lacks a counter-plea. The narrator reports that Abram is escorted to the border and that he goes up, away from Egypt. This time the narrator twice adds 'and his wife'. Only then does he present Abram on his own again. The heavy famine has passed by then. Now it is Abram who is 'very heavy', with livestock, with silver and with gold. The last two gifts were not mentioned before. Here the narrator already lets Abram have what the people of Israel will take away with them on their exodus from Egypt (Exod. 12.35). In the *Woman's Bible* (Stanton 1895), a product of the North-American women's movement from the end of the nineteenth century, our story's concluding verse is, however, read from a different perspective: 'Like many a modern millionaire he [Abram] was not a self-made but a wife-made man'. Moreover, it is considered 'a little curious that the man who thus gained wealth as the price of his wife's dishonor should have been held up as a model of all the patriarchal virtues' (p. 44).

As we have seen, the narrator presents the story about Sarai in Egypt as a prefiguration of the history of the people of Israel in Egypt. Like the exodus story it gives shape, and a hopeful response, to Israel's experience of oppression, foreign domination and exile. Sarai has been liberated by YHWH and Israel has been redeemed from Egyptian slavery; likewise, YHWH will make an end to the Babylonian exile.

But this is not all there is to be said. We have also seen that our story represents this particular experience of oppression from a male perspective; from the undoubtedly realistic experience of the powerlessness of men who know that their wives are extremely desirable objects for those who are more powerful than themselves. This experience is not shaped uncritically in Genesis 12. Abram is not presented as an underdog who is merely sympathetic. Pharaoh is not merely a totally unscrupulous villain: he is even granted the credit of teaching

Abram a lesson. Abram's focus on his own interests is, to be sure, eventually rewarded, but it is not depicted without criticism.

Sarai appears in this story as the object of men's manipulations. Her position as victim is thus pictured in a penetrating way. The only verbal form of which she is the subject, 'she was taken away', expresses once more the passivity to which she is condemned. Sarai's view, and her word which reaches up to YHWH, are nonetheless withheld from us. The narrator's imagination fails in this respect. To be able to give voice to the *dbr* of women like Sarai, one has first to gather enough courage for 'hearing them to speech'.

SARAH AND HAGAR: MATRIARCHS AND VISIONARIES*

Savina J. Teubal

Hagar the Egyptian (1990) grew out of my work, *Sarah the Priestess* (1984). As I came to realize, significant aspects of Sarah's life are closely intertwined with that of Hagar, her *šiphâ*; it therefore became apparent that Sarah's story is incomplete without an in-depth look at the role played by Hagar and the consequent relationship that existed between the two women.

In fact, *Sarah the Priestess* is based on the premise that the Genesis narratives describe an early tradition in which the matriarchs struggle to preserve a non-patriarchal social system, diametrically opposed to the patriarchal system they encounter in Canaan. Sarah's story, or the Sarah Tradition, in particular is symbolic of woman's struggle against a male culture that finally prevailed and eventually subordinated women.

That non-patriarchal system, I argued, had its roots in the land from which Sarah came. The Bible describes three generations of biblical matriarchs as 'barren'. Was it merely coincidental that these matriarchs were biologically incapable of conceiving? Two of them, Sarah and Rachel, acquired heirs, surprisingly, in the same manner as that of priestesses in Mesopotamia, their homeland. In fact, as I came to see, the matriarchs in the Genesis narratives—Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel—all acted in a manner recognizable as the established, traditional role of Mesopotamian priestesses.

The barren Sarah's need to acquire an heir/ess by means of

* Reprinted from S.J. Teubal, *Hagar the Egyptian: The Lost Traditions of the Matriarchs* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990): 191-200.

her handmaid, and Hagar's inappropriate reaction, as described in Genesis 16 for example, is reflected in section 146 of the Code of Hammurapi. Significantly, this regulation applies specifically to certain priestesses who *abstained from becoming pregnant themselves.*

We get a fuller picture of the Sarah Tradition with the accounts of the other matriarchs: Rebekah, Rachel and Leah. The preservation of blood ties was all-important to these women also. Rebekah marries a member of her descent group even though she has to leave her homeland to do so; however, she becomes 'disgusted with [her] life' because her son Esau marries women native to Canaan. She insists that Jacob choose a wife from among her brother's daughters.

On the surface it would seem that blood ties have something to do with inheritance; Sarah banishes Ishmael so that he will not share in the inheritance with her son Isaac. Rebekah's mother and brother are told of Isaac's inheritance at the time of her betrothal. Leah and Rachel help pry away their inheritance from Laban as though this were the main conflict between them and their father. However, when Laban pursues them, he is after the *t*^{e}*rāpîm*, the family images; no mention is made of stolen wealth. What inheritance were the matriarchs really concerned with?

Sarah's reason for banishing Ishmael is also unclear. Ishmael had been 'mocking' Isaac. What connection did Ishmael's mocking have with inheritance? Ishmael's mocking action must have had a religious connotation. There would have been no necessity for Sarah to banish Ishmael if her purpose was merely to disinherit him from material wealth. (Esau was easily disinherited). Rather, Sarah did not want Ishmael to influence Isaac culturally, and this is why she banished both the boy and his mother. Sarah was a religious woman and a woman of religion, a priestess. Isaac's religious upbringing must have been Sarah's foremost consideration. I do not believe that Sarah's banishment of Ishmael had anything to do with material wealth; it had to do with religious ethics. The rite of circumcision (an Egyptian but not a Mesopotamian custom) enforced new rules of conduct unacceptable to the priestess.

Rebekah and Rachel were also preoccupied with religious

ethics. Why is Rebekah so intent on having Jacob receive his father's blessing, rather than Esau? She is not prepared to allow Esau to succeed in the descent line. Is Rebekah concerned with material wealth?

At Rebekah's betrothal the inheritance discussed had been Isaac's material wealth; later, her son Jacob assures himself a larger portion of the inheritance, that of the firstborn, which Esau had given him in exchange for a bowl of lentils. Rebekah is not interested in that kind of inheritance for Jacob; she is interested in something else, something the blessing provides or represents; she is still 'disgusted with [her] life' even after Jacob has received the blessing. Now she insists on sending him to her brother's house for a wife. Jacob chooses Rachel, who is also concerned with religious culture. Rachel takes the *t'rāpîm* when they leave. Her father Laban would not have chased halfway across the country after some statuettes he could have easily replaced; these particular *t'rāpîm* had some important religious significance, and that is why Rachel took them. So Jacob's choice of a religious woman for a wife followed his mother's ambitions for him. It may have been that without the blessing Jacob would not have been acceptable as the husband of a woman of priestly rank, since it is immediately after the blessing that he is sent to be married. It seems evident that the matriarchs were more involved with the perpetuation of their culture and religion in foreign surroundings than their menfolk were.

Nevertheless, the narratives in Genesis certainly trace the genesis of patriarchal religion and culture. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob do indeed represent the patriarchal tradition incipient among the Hebrews. The extension of that tradition is what our present civilization is all about.

The narratives illustrate the increasing influence patriarchy had on the lives of women over a period of three generations, until the death of Jacob, or approximately three hundred years if recorded lifespans are taken into consideration.

Patriarchy's greatest asset in its effort to disrupt the matrifocal establishment was mobility. A man's option to move from one location to another with his women and children forced the family to be dependent on him. Significantly, the proto-historical portion of the Hebrew Bible commences with

the migration of Terah to Haran. Then, as if to emphasize this crucial event, it is sanctified by El Shaddai, who calls Abram with the momentous words *lēk lᵉkā*, 'walk, go forth' from your native land. Abram's calling was twofold: leave your matrifocal home; and go to a new land. Once in the new land the deity makes a covenant with Abram, saying: 'To your offspring I give this land'. Although Abram is not a conquering hero, he is the follower of a God who leads him away from the established social setting to a new location which promises possessions and power. It is this same mobility which, generations later, allows Jacob/Israel's sons to spread out and take hold of the land Abram was promised.

Ironically, it was Rebekah's decision to break the rule of matrilocality which sealed the destiny of her gens or descent group. Rebekah left her matrifocal home to marry Isaac in Canaan. Abraham sent his servant to bring a wife from the homeland, but he admonished the servant that on no condition must he take Isaac back there. Was this intentional on Abraham's part? Sarah was dead. Had the matriarch made arrangements for the betrothal of her son? Would Sarah have insisted on a matrilocal marriage for her son as Rebekah did? Rebekah was very young when *she* made the decision to leave her mother. It is possible that neither she nor her mother realized the implications for the young woman of living in patriarchal Canaan. Is this why Rebekah was so distressed, why she insisted on a matrilocal marriage for Jacob, in contrast to the marriages of her husband Isaac and his favorite, Esau?

The wily Jacob did not live up to his mother's expectations. After twenty years of matrilocal marriage, Jacob must convince his wives to return with him to Canaan. His descendants, the twelve tribes of Israel, claim the land promised to their ancestors.

Interestingly, the matriarchs were not totally discounted: a compromise was found. Endogamy was extended to include all circumcised males, but matriliny remained the only authentic path to membership within the group. Thus, circumcision is not the only requirement for Jewish males; they must also be born of Jewish mothers. And whether the man who impregnates a Jewish woman is circumcised or not, her offspring will

automatically be recognized as a Jew, a member of her group.

The narratives of the Sarah tradition represent a non-patriarchal system struggling for survival in isolation in a foreign land. Nevertheless, women of strength emerge from the pages of Genesis, women who are respected by men. Their function in life, though different to that of men, is regarded as equally important to society. Women's participation in society, as described in the narratives, presupposes a system in which women were able to maintain an elevated professional position, into which were incorporated the roles of mother and educator. Just as significantly, these women were in control of their own bodies and their own spiritual heritage.

Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel, in identification with a goddess, chose to remain childless for decades. They chose to conceive, late in life, because of the circumstances they encountered in exile. They were venerated during their lifetimes as priestesses and as women. It is not clear whether a priestess who became a mother was forced to relinquish her profession. If her progeny was the result of the sexual component of the *hieros gamos*, was her child regarded as the offspring of a goddess, of a mortal woman, or of someone in between represented by a priestess? In other words, did the fact of conception during the ritual of the Sacred Wedding, or the fact of birth at a later date, establish the status of the mother or the child? In early versions of the ritual the priestess who participated in the *hieros gamos* was thought to be the goddess incarnate; if conception took place, the offspring were regarded as part divine. In much later times, a child born of the sacred union was to be exposed to the elements and left to its fate. Sarah's son Isaac, however, was celebrated at a feast given by Abraham. Does this mean that Sarah lived at a time when the priestess was regarded as goddess incarnate and her son as semi-divine, as was the case with the Mesopotamian Gilgamesh? Or was the son's life spared because the priestess was living in safety in exile? What had become of Sarah's status in exile, in the society in which she was living?

How far did Sarah's vision of the society extend? Did she feel that she had been transported to and isolated in a patriarchal future? Did she long for her non-patriarchal homeland? Or did

she leave because that social system was changing also?[1] Did she, in fact, have a choice?

These questions and many more can be asked but not answered. But Rebekah's expression of anguish would seem to represent the despair and sorrow experienced by all three matriarchs: 'If so, why do I exist?' (Gen. 25.22).

Over four thousand years later, this same struggle is being experienced by women in both social and religious spheres. But we are not alone. Sarah is there, standing on the threshold, waiting to be returned to her rightful place in history. Significantly, the title which could qualify the three mothers of Israel, 'Priestess', has been totally eradicated from the record. The feminine form of the word for priest (*kohēn*) does not appear anywhere in the Hebrew Bible, although it has survived in the form *kāhina* in Arabic.

There are still some formidable obstacles to be overcome, but the record of Sarah's life reveals the existence of an alternative system to patriarchy. The social system the three matriarchs defended indicates the presence of a struggle against patriarchy, and of a social structure in which women played a prominent part in religion and culture. Thus, the Sarah Tradition gives us an insight into the potential of women's roles to affirm women.

In *Hagar the Egyptian* I turn to the traditionally subordinate women in the Genesis narratives—the handmaids, characterized as concubines or slaves, and to Hagar in particular—in an effort to recreate their experience.

Two desert sequences in the Genesis narratives are accredited to the life story of Hagar, Sarah's *šipḥâ*. Nevertheless, my research has led me to believe that only four of the sixteen verses (Gen. 16.7-15; 21.14-21) apply to Hagar. The remainder belong to the story of a figure I have identified as the Desert Matriarch.

1. It is difficult to reconcile the historically patriarchal Mesopotamia with the non-patriarchal system evident in Genesis. Either the stories reflect a pre-historical culture, or the matriarchs were members of an as yet undetermined organization or clan.

The originally separate narrative of the Desert Matriarch is about the miraculous appearance of a well and the mysterious birth of her son, Ishmael. The Desert Matriarch, like Sarah, is (1) a woman blessed with an epiphany, (2) whose son becomes the manifestation of her vision. Like Sarah's son Isaac, who faces death at the hands of his father (Gen. 22), the son of the Desert Matriarch also experiences symbolic rebirth. He, like Isaac after him, is saved from death by divine intervention. The abode of the Desert Matriarch becomes a sacred sanctuary, Beer-lahai-ro'i, as did the grove of the terebinths of Mamre, the abode of Sarah the Priestess.

Perhaps most important, both matriarchs—the Desert Matriarch and Sarah—are recorded as participating in a theophany. Their direct interaction (with life-giving connotations) with the supernatural is the element that gives substance to the events. This exceptional situation is what has given their stories a factor of timelessness and secrecy, as though the revelation were too sacred to be imparted.

Once we have recognized that Ishmael is not the son of Hagar, and that her own child remains unnamed, a direct connection can easily be drawn to her descendants: Hagar is the eponymous ancestor of the Hagarites. There is ample evidence in the biblical texts that the Ishmaelites and the Hagarites were two separate, though contemporary, tribes. The Ishmaelites survived at most into the seventh century BCE; the Hagarites, on the other hand, grew into a powerful tribe that played an important role in the development of Islam.

The Meaning of the Life of Hagar[1]

'Consciousness of a real and meaningful world is intimately connected with the discovery of the sacred', so wrote Mircea Eliade (1978: I, xiii). 'In short, the "sacred" is an element in the structure of consciousness and not a stage in the history of consciousness.' It can also be maintained that the 'sacred' is an element in the structure of religious history and not a stage in the history itself.

1. Teubal 1991: 191-200.

As I see it, the voice of prophecy has been frozen in history: a male voice cried out in the wilderness and that voice was legitimated by making the sacred historical. Whether Hebrew prophet, Jesus or Mohammed, male vision has been affirmed, in linear progression, as the ultimate revelation. In this way female vision, present or ancient, has been undermined.

But visionary experience cannot be rooted to a stage in history: it is 'an element in the structure of [human] consciousness'. Whether ancient or contemporary, female or male, all visionary experience is valid. There is ample evidence, as shown in part in this study alone, that the ancient voice of the female prophet has been silenced. But the message in those silent texts is clamoring for recognition.

In the context of the story of Hagar, the power of the 'sacred' in the text is a constant that requires renewal from generation to generation. The voice in the wilderness is female also: Hagar, the Desert Matriarch, Sarah, Rachel, Miriam, and so on. Their stories have been left to us for a purpose; so that their traditions may serve future generations. The renewal of traditions is what my work is about; this is not to disavow tradition but to allow it meaningful process. To have any significance for us, mythology and legend need to be focused on our own concerns and adapted to our own image.

This process of renewal is not new. 'Even the earliest epic traditions of Israel did not reflect directly the religious milieu of the time of their origin.' (Cross 1973: 3); as we have seen throughout this study, the biblical traditions reflected the religious, cultural and historical milieu of the time in which they were popularized.

The biblical stories are male centered, because they were composed at a time when certain groups of men were attempting to take control of their society in order that it could expand and grow. The military elite were spreading out over rural lands. To reinforce their nationalistic project, the image of the archetypal hero became necessary. Tragically, this archetype was created at the expense of women. Nevertheless, at that time, the image of the archetypal hero was felt to be a dire necessity, because the survival of their group was at stake.

If, during the early monarchy's recompilation of the biblical

material, the powerful tribe of the Hagarites was known to acknowledge the matriarch Hagar as their common ancestress, a problem would have been posed for the androcentric writers who were attempting to highlight the patriarch: descent was to be changed to the male line. At that time the Ishmaelites also had close affiliation to the Israelites. The earliest reference to them is in the story of Joseph, who was sold to a caravan of Ishmaelites by his brothers (Gen. 37.25, 27-28; 39.1). The latest, for the chroniclers, was David's sister Abigail, who was married to 'Jether the Ishmaelite' (1 Chron. 2.17). The Ishmaelites must also have acknowledged the story of their ancestry; the Desert Matriarch and the miraculous birth of her son must have been a familiar tale in the court of the king. But it, too, lacked the force of an absolute and exclusive patriarchal figure. By fusing the story of Hagar to that of the Desert Matriarch, and the birth of the sons to the birth of Ishmael, Abraham would become the progenitor of the Hagarite, the Ishmaelite, and all of their descendants. Finally, under the influence of Babylonians and Assyrians, whose androcentric bias is all too well known (Teubal 1983: 305ff.), redactors would have been sufficiently prejudiced to relegate Hagar's role to that of concubine and slave.

It is therefore essential that we attempt to envision the world of the matriarchs in early Israel as it may have been prior to the androcentric overlay. In the first place, the physical environment in which the matriarchs lived was that of a tribal nature, in small townships.[1] Their intent was the survival of the tribal unit, its religion and its culture. Sarah's tribal unit was establishing itself on foreign soil. Nevertheless, their purpose was to obtain land rights for themselves and their livestock under the auspices of fostering deities, as opposed to conquering for possession of territory and booty in obedience to a father-god, as with the warrior elite of a monarchy. This is clearly illustrated in the

1. Without hard evidence of their existence, it is futile to attempt to date the period in which the matriarchs lived. However, as I have stated elsewhere, the physical nature of their settlements seems similar to that found at the archaeological site of Jemdet Nasr in Mesopotamia. Whether this type of settlement existed parallel to that of the warrior elite is of no consequence, provided the latter's influence was not in evidence in the stories.

peaceful[1] separation of Abraham and Lot, at a point where 'the land could not support them staying together' (Gen. 13.6). These two patriarchs neither bought nor conquered the land they chose; they simply set boundaries with grazing rights for their cattle. The land belongs to the deity who 'gives' it (the rights) to Abraham and his descendants.

Despite the shared responsibilities of women and men in their means of survival and the transmittal of culture and religion, each functioned in distinct spheres. Women controlled every aspect of the propagation of their tribal unit, including the sexual activities of their men. A bonding between the women and their *śᵉpāḥôt*, their companions, facilitated this condition. I do not envision this situation as that of dominance of one gender over another; but, rather, a condition which permitted women to regulate their pregnancies and sexual activity and avoid any sexual harassment directed at themselves, their daughters, or their companions.

The traditionally understood theme of Hagar's life has resonated deeply over the centuries, serving as a sanction to the enslavement of human beings in the Western world. Hagar's role has been that of the mistreated Egyptian slave, thrust empty-handed into the desert with her son, left to watch her child die of thirst under a bush where she had placed him, and being saved by the appearance of a miraculous well of water provided by the God of Abraham. According to the extant text, the child's life is saved only because he is the seed of Abraham. This has been the basic text. As Phyllis Trible points out, Hagar moves 'from bondage to flight to bondage', and then proceeds 'from bondage to expulsion to homelessness' (1984: 10).

But this story elicits a troubling question: why would any deity perpetrate such cruelty? Moreover, Sarah has been the major cause of Hagar's misfortune. She has been viewed as the haughty (white? Jewish?) slave-owner,[2] seemingly unconcerned

1. The peaceful factor in the separation is often attributed to the magnanimous nature of Abraham (see Speiser 1964: 98, for instance), but I contend that Abraham's choice had to include consideration of a sacred site for Sarah; and, because of this, he chose to encamp close to the sacred terebinth grove of Mamre (Teubal 1984: 28).

2. As described by Dolores Williams, Claremont, February, 1989.

with her role as victimizer. On a more poetic level, it is tempting to consider that the Hebrews were themselves enslaved by the Egyptians at a later date, as though some form of divine retribution was effected for the enslavement of Hagar.

But the archetypal image of Hagar as slave, concubine and victim, and of Sarah as barren mistress, has denied women Eliade's 'consciousness of a real and meaningful world, intimately connected with the discovery of the sacred' (1978: I, xiii). Furthermore, the focus on their role solely as procurers of male descendants is what has denied women the naming of female experience of empowerment.

In antiquity, events in the lives of prophets, seers and visionaries were not only narrated in oral tradition, they were also re-enacted at seasonal festivals. As we have seen, however, the biblical texts recorded for the benefit of one generation have masked the spiritual experience of the matriarchs, which must have served to empower a previous generation of women. A re-enactment of the *hieros gamos* of, say, Sarah and Abimelech/Yarih, or the Desert Matriarch and El-Ro'i, and the birth of their semi-divine offspring could not have failed to empower generations of women.

Furthermore, the main theme of the stories was neither sexual activity nor the birth of a son. The main theme established the core element that unified the tribal segment: the ancestor of a people. Androcentric obsession with sex and sons has only served to undermine the sacred roles of women.

Looked at anew, Genesis 16 (vv. 1-5) and 21 (vv. 6-12, 14, 17, 18, 20a, 21) describe the matriarch Hagar and her association with Sarah, a priestess. Predicaments concerning the destinies of the matriarchs form the central theme throughout. Although the need of an heir/ess for Sarah is pivotal in the beginning, it also helps elucidate the origin of Hagar's pregnancy and the paternity of her future child. The main theme of the story, however, is derived from Hagar's theophany in the wilderness in which she is designated by divine election the ancestor of a people, the Hagarites. In this way, Hagar's story is much like Sarah's.[1]

1. Bakan accurately suggests that not all the offspring of Abraham are

Indeed, Hagar's story parallels Sarah's to a surprising degree:

1. Both Sarah and Hagar are exiles in a foreign land; Sarah came from Ur, Mesopotamia, to the northeast; Hagar came from Egypt, to the southwest.
2. Both women are isolated from their cultures and their kin.
3. Both women spend many (presumably celibate) years in Canaan, before becoming pregnant.
4. Both have the same husband.
5. Each has only one pregnancy.
6. Each woman is singled out by divinity to become the mother of a people.
7. Each has a son.

In fact, the texts give an insight into the nature of these women. Imagery in the stories describes their attributes as though emphasizing their distinct characteristics. Sarah's story, for instance, is associated with voice and hearing; Hagar and the Desert Matriarch's is associated with vision. It is possible that the repetitious quality of the characterization was meant to infer oracular prophecy and visionary faculty, emphasizing the women's spiritual experience.

In Sarah's case we are told that:

1. Abraham *heard* the *voice* of Sarah (Gen. 16.2).
2. Sarah was *listening* at the tent entrance (Gen. 18.10).
3. Sarah says, 'Everyone who *hears* will laugh at/with me' (Gen. 21.6).
4. And Elohim says to Abraham, 'Whatever Sarah tells you *listen* to her *voice*' (Gen. 21.12).

Hagar, on the other hand:

1. *Saw* that she was pregnant;
2. and (Sarah was lowered in her sight (*bᵉ'ēynēhā*) (Gen. 16.4).
3. And Sarah says of Hagar, 'I am lowered in her *sight*' (Gen. 16.5).

Israelites: the Israelites stem only from Sarah. Sarah is more definitely the ancestor of the Israelites than Abraham (Bakan 1979: 37).

And it is the Desert Matriarch who is portrayed as visionary:

1. YHWH said, '*See*, you are pregnant'.
2. She said, 'I cannot *look* on the death of the child' (Gen. 21.16).
3. Elohim *opened* her *eyes*.
4. And she *saw* a well of water (Gen. 21.19).
5. She calls the deity 'El-Ro'i', *seeing* or visionary god, by which she meant 'I *saw* after *seeing*' (Gen. 16.13).
6. Therefore the well is called 'Well of the living *vision*' (Gen. 16.14).

The Desert Matriarch, although nameless, distinguishes herself as *rā'îtî aḥ^{a}rê rō'î* ('I who saw [deity?] after my vision'). Perhaps most impressive in the Desert Matriarch story is the fact that she is the only person in the Bible to devise a name for the god who rescued her and her son: El-Ro'i, the visionary or seeing god.

Because of the identification of the Desert Matriarch as a separate character from Hagar, her story can be appreciated as a distinct unit. As became evident in my study, this story contains elements of Egyptian mythology not apparent in the Hagar account. Features in the lives of the goddesses Neith and Isis permeate the Desert Matriarch text. Although stories of Egyptian goddesses include aspects of female empowerment lacking in their biblical counterparts, efforts were also made to limit their roles exclusively to that of motherhood. Isis, for example, was a childless goddess until, with modification and embellishment from generation to generation, she became the wife of Osiris (Budge 1969: 204). And in the most well-known version of a myth, recorded by Plutarch in the first century of the Common Era, Isis conceived Horus from the body of her dead husband. Isis became a devoted mother and remained the most popular and important of maternal goddesses as mother of Horus. According to Budge (1969: 220),

> The pictures and sculptures wherein she is represented suckling her child Horus formed the foundation for the Christian figures and paintings of Madonna and Child...many of the attributes of Isis, the God-mother, the mother of Horus,

and of Neith, the goddess of Sais, are identical to those of Mary the Mother of Christ.

It is nevertheless intriguing that ancient Near Eastern goddesses like the biblical matriarchs are never portrayed in a relationship with a daughter, comparable to that of Demeter and Persephone, although vestiges of these may remain. Isis, who was identified with Persephone (Budge 1969: II, 217), was the dark-skinned daughter of Nut, the sky goddess; she was born at Dendara where a birth-chamber, the *mammisi*, was constructed for a ritual performance of her birth (Budge 1969: 108). It is possible, if not probable, that stories of relationships between goddesses and their daughters became the 'silent texts' of the Egyptians after the appearance of the 'Followers of Horus', founders of the dynastic monarchy of Egypt. Likewise, there are no biblical stories of mother–daughter relationships. Dinah is the only daughter mentioned in the Genesis narratives but, despite her tragic story, there is no account of her mother Leah's reaction to her daughter's experience. Did the court of David silence those texts? The closest approximation to a mother–daughter bonding is in the story of Ruth and Naomi, a mother/daughter-in-law story. But even that beautiful tale was co-opted to serve the monarchy. The last line awkwardly gives Ruth's child a name: 'Obed; he was the father of Jesse, father of David'! (Campbell 1975: 169).

We must also be careful not to overlook the importance of the goddess in Jewish heritage. Even a cursory reading of Raphael Patai's extraordinary book, *The Hebrew Goddess* (1967), which traces goddess veneration from early Israel to the kabbalistic era of the sixteenth century, is testimony enough to the reality of a non-monotheistic Judaism in which goddess worship played a prominent part in religion. But, even here, there is no bonding between the great goddess Asherah and her daughter Anath.

The biblical stories, then, are not about banal wives or concubines but, in part, of oracular priestesses or visionaries, who acknowledged the female deities of the land and were empowered to prophesy and envision the future through divine inspiration. Furthermore, these matriarchs were empowered, or empowered themselves, to change the social order.

The story of Hagar and Sarah, like that of Abraham and Lot,

is also a story of separation. This new order stresses individualism, as opposed to cooperation. What began as a cooperative effort between Hagar, Abraham and Sarah for the benefit of community, ended with each party concerned solely with his or her own future. Sarah re-orders her life around her one descendant, Isaac: Hagar, the companion of Sarah, is directed to find companionship in her only son; and Abraham re-negotiates life with a new wife, Keturah.

A step is also taken toward individual theology, separation in the religious sphere. The god/dess who approved of cooperation is exchanged, in each case, for the guidance of an individual regional deity. Thus Sarah's god admonishes Abraham to 'do as Sarah says'; Hagar's god leads her away to establish her own community; Abraham accepts membership into an order that requires circumcision and obedience to a sole deity. Even the Desert Matriarch envisions her own personal divinity.

Thus Hagar's story is not just the record of change in a social system; it is a re-evaluation of social values, a re-ordering of a philosophy of life. The significance of her life is that Hagar was able to attain both social and spiritual freedom. The biblical account is not explicit as to what extent Hagar was instrumental in severing her career as *šipḥâ*, whose main responsibility was to care for the needs of the priestess Sarah and provide her with offspring. Her first step to autonomy was in claiming her own child; whether her comportment with Sarah had any influence on the outcome is not clear. But if separation was an element in the new order, responsibility of a mother for her own child was axiomatic. Furthermore, potential freedom of choice for her own sexual relationships is now viable for her.

It is in times of crisis that religious traditions are able to renew themselves. The monarchy is no more, its heritage is being challenged, and a new age is at hand. As Adrienne Rich has wisely noted, 'Women [were] made taboo to women—not just sexually, but as comrades, cocreators, conspirators. In breaking this taboo, we are reuniting with our mothers, in reuniting with our mothers, we are breaking this taboo' (1977: 259). In breaking this taboo we redeem our ancient foremothers as well.

There is no question that Hagar must be redeemed for Muslim as well as Jewish and Christian women. Her courage in the face

of adversity; her faith in herself and in her destiny, guided by her own spiritual power, must be a revelation to all women. Above all, her close relationship with divinity and her inspiration to forge her own community must not be forgotten.

The matriarchs' return to cosmic consciousness offers spiritual guidance that has been denied women for millennia: reject victimization, seek empowerment in community.

READING FOR THE AUTHOR'S SIGNATURE: GENESIS 21.1-21 AND LUKE 15.11-32 AS INTERTEXTS*

Arie Troost

In biblical texts, as in all ancient texts, the author's gender is by no means clear. Not only are the books of the Bible largely anonymous, they also date from an oral culture in which the concept of authorship is as diffuse as is the notion of text itself. Many layers of verbal production may be perceived in the text, many authors can be presupposed. Even in cases where an author's name is handed down to us by tradition, or where an author seems to refer to 'himself', we have to give account of this diffuseness, apart from the probability of pseudonimity. We have to look more carefully at what is in the text to learn more about its author's gender. But can we? And why should we?

Recent feminist research has proved that we can try to establish biblical texts as products of women's authorship.[1] But in cases where we find that the construction of the biblical texts is

* The first version of this article was read to the Structuralism and Exegesis Section at the 1989 Annual Meeting of the AAR/SBL at Anaheim, California. The article was written as part of the Research Program in Biblical Exegesis at the Theological Faculty of the Catholic University at Nijmegen.

I would like to thank Mieke Bal, Athalya Brenner, Anja Kosterman, Sjef van Tilborg, Huub Welzen and Ellen van Wolde for their careful reading of earlier drafts and for their suggestions and criticisms. I am also obliged to Elizabeth Castelli, David H. Fisher and Stephen Fowl for their responses to the Anaheim version.

1. The 'woman author project' in biblical exegesis was initiated by Bekkenkamp and van Dijk (1987: 91-108), and substantially furthered by van Dijk-Hemmes (1991). My essay is intended as a response to this project.

largely male dominated, can we nevertheless say more about it? One of the questions in feminist literary criticism of the Bible is whether biblical texts thought to be male biased are indeed 'male' in all layers and in all aspects. Is an androcentric text the result of 'male' reading conventions? That is, are textual conventions produced by the reader? Or *is* the androcentric text itself 'male'? In other words, are these textual conventions *in* the text? How then can one 'get behind male interpretation'? Can one ever decide on what is *in* the text?

My intention is to reflect upon the problems of tracing textual conventions in biblical texts and in exegetical discourse. We will face several problems in tracing textual conventions. As I see it, these problems are largely produced by a commonly accepted theory of text that might be understood as a theory of intertextuality.

Usually Julia Kristeva is credited for formulating and developing the notion of intertextuality (1969: 143-73).[1] According to Kristeva, intertextuality is a characteristic of all verbal utterances (texts). It means that each text is an answer to preceding texts because it absorbs and transforms earlier texts. Therefore, a text can only be understood in terms of contemporary or preceding texts, its so-called intertexts.

Two kinds of intertextuality are commonly discerned, a *narrow* and a *broad* one. Narrow intertextuality may be conceived of as the use of quotations, allusions and the like. This definition of narrow intertextuality is elaborated by Kristeva (1974). Broad intertextuality may be conceived of as the use of various codes, conventions and interpretative schemes. This definition of broad intertextuality is elaborated by Roland

1. Kristeva elaborates theories of Mikhail Bakhtin, who failed to produce a systematic theory of intertextuality. His reflections on intertextuality are sampled from diverse books attributed to him. Recently Bakhtin received much attention especially from feminist literary theorists. However, Virginia Woolf has already formulated similar thoughts on intertextuality in, e.g., *A Room of One's Own* (1972; discussed by Miller 1988: 6-7) and in the only known BBC recording of a lecture of hers from the thirties (Maaike Meijer directed my attention to this lecture). In my opinion Woolf should be included in any theorizing on intertextuality.

Barthes (1970). Both kinds of intertextuality are only acceptable as significant in so far as they are actually traced by the reader. I will therefore allude to both kinds of intertextuality, the narrow and the broad one, as *traceable intertextuality*.[1]

The notion of a traceable intertextuality is problematic in at least three ways. These problems involve the reader, the text and the author. I shall treat the difficulties in this same order.

1. As Kristeva makes clear in her examples, a defining characteristic of traceable intertextuality is that it can actually be traced.[2] Now Jonathan Culler (1981: 105-107), in his critique of Kristeva's examples, argues that such traceability is confined to a limited amount of intertexts. Culler's point is that specification of a text's intertextuality undermines the general concept of intertextuality. What Culler in his discussion omits is this: while tracing, we depend on the body of intertexts left over by the arbitrary processes of history, on our knowledge of these intertexts, and on our personal willingness to recognize certain texts as intertexts of the text we are actually reading at a given instance. This means that we are restricted in tracing intertexts by the interpretative tradition in which we stand. But what if a dominant interpretative tradition is not *your* tradition? What if you have a sense of being excluded from a (dominant) tradition?[3]

2. If, as Barthes says (1970: 16, 22-29), every reader necessarily reads through conventions and codes already known,[4] then

1. Culler (1981: 110-18) gives a survey of positions in intertextual theory by discussing the theories of Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva, Laurent Jenny and Harold Bloom. Culler distinguishes two kinds of intertextuality, a broad one and a specific one, and uses them to illustrate the paradoxical nature of intertextuality. As Culler explains, in order to apply the general concept of intertextuality you have to specify but, by specifying, the general concept is dissolved into a kind of source-criticism. My theoretical reflections on intertextuality are intended as a response to Culler's chapter.

2. Kristeva's examples in 1969: 194; 1974: 337-58.

3. Annette Kolodny (1985a: 46-62) addresses the question, quoting Woolf's reflections on this subject.

4. Kolodny discusses this problem (1985b: 153-57). As she explains, 'We read well, and with pleasure, what we already know how to read; and what we know how to read is to a large extent dependent upon what

those textual conventions that are *not* perceived as such cannot easily be traced by the reader. This means that the text is not recognizable as having a productive ability of its own.

3. Consequently, Barthes's notion of conventional reading entails that the question of the author becomes obscured, as is especially argued by Nancy Miller (1988: 1-21, 77-101, 102-21).[1] However, the existence of the author seems important if you want to take possibilities for non-conventional interpretations into account.

In short, a theory that regards the text as a result of conventions put together by the reader runs the risk of restricting the meaning to the interpretative tradition in which the reader stands. In regard to biblical exegesis, this means that the interpretative tradition by which we read biblical texts is the result of a process of selection almost exclusively performed by men.

How could we then trace textual conventions that are non-conventional for the reader? In other words: how could we trace women's traditions within a male-dominated tradition?[2] I would suggest the following methodological steps:

1. First, one must unsettle those current interpretative traditions that are directed by conventional readings. This may be done by changing our perspective for non-dominant, marginalized situations. In this sense Culler, in his survey of feminist literary criticism, proposes 'reading as a woman' as a method (1982: 43-64).
2. This unsettling is followed by raising the question of the author's gender. The possibility that a biblical text has

we have already read (works from which we developed our expectations and learned our interpretative strategies)' (p. 154).

1. Miller draws our attention to a coincidence in time between 'a predominantly Anglo/American feminist discussion of female authorship' and 'French post-structuralist paradigms of textuality' in which the death of the author is pronounced (cf. Miller 1988: 3). Miller's theorizing and interpreting between these two positions has been the chief inspiration for me to write this article.

2. For my use of the term 'women's traditions', see the discussion in van Dijk-Hemmes 1991. Van Dijk-Hemmes responds to Elaine Showalter's 'gynocritics', especially to the 'model of women's culture' (Showalter 1985).

(at least partially) a woman author opens up new ways of interpretation. It affects one's attitude as a reader, in so far as one brings other interpretative paradigms to bear on the text. Or, as Annette Kolodny says, the context of judgment changes (1985b: 158). One can try to read for emblems of women's writing in biblical texts. In this sense Miller proposes 'reading for the author's signature' as a method (1988: 77-97).

3. In addition, I suggest that we establish open-ended conventions.[1] By this I mean creating an open space, in which conventions that are still foreign to the reader can be elaborated. Departing from the emblems of women's writing, one may reread the text according to intertextual schemes provided by other instances of women's reading/writing.

Let me explain these three steps. Taking another perspective, the first step, is not a question of mere choice. It is more like a wilful, gradual paradigm shift. When it comes to 'reading as a woman', I am not sure to what degree a man can actually read as a woman. Women have learned to read as a man. So probably men can learn to read as a woman.[2] But then, what if one, as a male reader, does not 'command the proper interpretative strategies', because one does not 'share the context' of women's reading (Kolodny 1985a: 56)?[3] Therefore I suggest that we combine 'reading as a woman' with a reading of women's literature and interpretations. That is, 'reading as a woman' as a man is to read departing from a body of women's writing. 'To set ourselves the task of learning to read a wholly different set

1. I prefer to use the term 'open-ended convention', since the term 'non-conventionality' seems to me too 'centristic'. The term 'open-ended convention' was suggested to me by Athalya Brenner.

2. I am aware of the difference in these two 'learnings'. The first one, 'women learning to read as a man', is enforced. The second is a self-imposed one.

3. The question is addressed by Kolodny (1985a: 46-62). She formulates it as 'the problem of reading any text as "a synecdoche for a larger whole including other texts" when that necessarily assumed "whole system of texts" in which it is embedded is foreign to one's reading knowledge' (p. 50).

of texts will make of us different kinds of readers...' (Kolodny 1985a: 59).

This leads me to the second step, the importance of taking the author seriously. From this point of view, one will notice that nearly all the examples Culler gives of 'reading as a woman' are actually examples of reading male fictional texts 'as a woman'. I wonder what identity a woman reading male texts 'as a woman' may gather from such texts.[1]

Therefore I propose to read women's texts. One may object that whatever is written by women is not per se non-androcentric, let alone gynocentric. My response would be that this does not make it less worthwhile, because 'writing as a man' is part of women's experience also. It is the context in which the signature of the woman author is to be found. This is especially the case in biblical and other ancient texts.

The issue of reading women's texts is addressed especially by Miller. In her chapter on 'Arachnologies' (1988: 77-101) Miller proposes a reading of texts from the perspective of gender, reading for the author's signature. She proposes 'a critical positioning which reads *against* the weave of indifferentiation to discover the embodiment in writing of a gendered subjectivity; to recover within representation the emblems of its construction' (p. 80).

Miller offers a theory that makes the tracing of 'open-ended' conventions possible, which would be the third step. However, when applying this theory in our reading of biblical texts, we are faced with an additional problem. I have already acknowledged that in biblical texts, as in all ancient texts, the author's gender is by no means clear. We can try to define it by means of analysis, that is narratological analysis, intertextual analysis and discourse analysis.[2] But even where we find that the construction of biblical texts is indeed largely male dominated, as for example

1. Bekkenkamp (1989) discusses this problem in her critique of Culler's section on 'Reading as a Woman'.

2. In the field of gender-motivated biblical exegesis such methods of analysis have especially been applied by, e.g., Bekkenkamp (1986), Bekkenkamp and van Dijk (1987), Bal (1988a), van Dijk-Hemmes (1989a, 1989b, 1991) and Brenner (1989a, 1989b, 1991).

Phyllis Bird says, can we nevertheless say more about it?[1]

The central question I want to raise is this: is it possible, in allegedly male-dominated biblical texts, to raise women's voices again, to read women back into these biblical texts? Would it be possible to find different voices within these texts, and to open up male-imposed conventions, in order to trace conventions that are as yet uncovered?

I have already suggested that we read the texts that a male-dominated tradition has handed down to us by shifting the emphasis and by foregrounding women, departing from a body of women's literature and literary criticism. To find an answer to the additional problem posed by the ancient texts, which appear to be too thoroughly male dominated to reflect conventions of women's writing, I propose to read such texts *as if* they were women's texts, conjecturing a woman author. That is, I propose to read such texts departing from women's literature, using instances of this literature as subtext. I call on imagination, or creativity, in order to try to read women's texts as subtext, in order to reread a biblical text assumed to be male biased. I would suggest that this be called *'as if* reading *diffuse intertextuality'*.[2]

Diffuse intertexts can be imagined within a biblical context as well as within other literary canons. They can be expressed in terms of biblical texts, and thus become traceable. Texts that, on first reading, do not seem to have relevance to each other as traceable intertexts may mutually illuminate each other when

1. See Bird 1974: 41: 'The Old Testament is a collection of writings by males from a society dominated by males'.

2. The terms *traceable* and *diffuse intertextuality* were suggested to me by Mieke Bal. I used both terms earlier (1988) in a slightly different sense. The theory underlying this concept of diffuse intertextuality is based on my reading of Kristeva's concept of intertextuality (1974: 159-60), departing from a psychoanalytical notion of the heterogeneity of language. Kristeva proposes a notion of intertextuality as 'transposition', to be distinguished from a narrower notion of intertextuality that is used as a kind of source-critics.

For an *as if* reading, see Miller 1988: 83. Braidotti (1989: 103) proposes a 'philosophy as if'; although Braidotti does not say so, I assume she was inspired by Hans Vaihinger (1913).

regarded both from a gendered position, and as products of a gendered author. The interrelations between a text and its assumed diffuse intertext(s) are illuminated by the hypothesis of a common subtext.[1]

All this may sound unfamiliar and confusing. Hence, by way of an example, I will illustrate this theory of intertextuality by comparing the story of Sarah's giving birth to Isaac and Abraham's sending Hagar and Ishmael away (Gen. 21.1-21), with a notoriously male dominated text, the parable of the Prodigal or Lost Son (Lk. 15.11-32).

At first sight both stories seem to relate incomparable events. Gen. 21.1-21 is about a miraculous birth, in which it resembles many other stories in the Hebrew Bible.[2] Lk. 15.11-32 tells of a father accepting his son who has gone astray, a parable in the context of gladness at the recovery of loss. In Genesis 21 the mothers have prominent roles, although their characterization seems to reflect male sexual politics.[3] In Luke 15 the mother is absent altogether.[4] In Genesis 21 Elohim plays an active part in the story. In Luke 15 God is embodied in the father (due to the larger narrative embedding of the parable).

Despite the obvious difficulties, it is possible to read both

1. For my use of the term 'subtext', see Bal 1988a. Bal reads Freud's essay on virginity as a subtext to the book of Judges. As Bal explains,

> Freud's text, as well as any other scholarly text I will use, should not be seen as a 'source' or authority. I use those texts as subtexts, as texts that can shed some light on the ancient text, mediated by my reading of both, in that their discourse resembles the discourse of Judges. The result will not be a master-discourse in which the ancient text is the object and the scholarly text a tool. A dialogue between three discourses, which mutually illuminate and criticize each other, would be a more appropriate image (1988a: 19).

2. Listed by Fuchs (1985) and Brenner (1986).

3. As described by Fuchs (1985) and Brenner (1986).

4. Schaberg (1992), commenting on Luke's Gospel, draws attention to the 'difficulties a woman encounters reading self-consciously as a woman'. She illustrates her point by an examination of the parable of the Good Samaritan. She proceeds by saying that 'Many other passages in Luke, such as the parable of the prodigal son/father (15.11-32, which can be read as the parable of the missing mother)...are occasions to confront androcentrism...and to recognize the urgent need for women's own parables, women's own narratives' (p. 282).

stories as diffuse intertexts because, in both, we see the coming and going of children and their parents' response to it. The parents respond differently in each case. Apparently, the differences are gendered. The basic tendency in both stories is for the father to establish a relationship between himself and his children. It is the mother's response in Gen. 21.1-21 that eventually brings to light the father's incompetence. Could this diffuse intertextuality provide a clue from where to start our open-ended conventional reading of the Luke passage?

As I wish to demonstrate, scholarly interpretation of both stories is directed by strong reading conventions that continue androcentric textual conventions. Once these conventions are perceived, it is possible to reread Gen. 21.1-21 as a story representing women's traditions. In Lk. 15.11-32 things are more difficult. Here, androcentric conventions seem to have erased almost all traces of women's traditions.

Reading in detail, we will discover in Luke's parable a clear signature of male authorship. However, when we read the details from the perspective of established instances of women's literature in the Bible and feminist interpretation of it, they will indicate a way out of closed-off conventionality. Our rereading of Genesis 21, then, will enable us to start a (partial) rereading of Luke's parable.[1]

Mother's Inheritance: The Children of Hagar and Sarah

The story of Gen. 21.1-21 opens with the birth of Isaac. According to conventional interpretation we hear that, after Isaac's birth, a reversal takes place between Isaac and Ishmael.[2] Isaac, Sarah's son and Abraham's latter-born, is privileged while Ishmael, Hagar's son and Abraham's first-born, is sent

1. In comparing these two narratives I am of course not necessarily suggesting any authorial intentionality on the part of Luke. The comparison is a reader's construct, based on a supposed common (conventional) subtext of a father's appropriation of his son.

2. The name Ishmael is mentioned for the first time in Gen. 16.11, 15, but not in Gen. 21. For brevity's sake I refer to Hagar's child here as Ishmael, but without conflating Gen. 16 and Gen. 21. I wish to read Gen. 16 and Gen. 21 separately.

away. The narrative strategy is interesting: the story of Ishmael's dismissal is told as an inversion of the events told at Isaac's birth.[1] We may call Ishmael's dismissal an unbirth.[2] Isaac and Ishmael not only change places, they are substituted for each other, so that Isaac gets priority as Abraham's heir.

The commentaries on Genesis I consulted suggested that the dismissal of Ishmael is achieved by a conflict between the mothers. According to them it is Sarah's fury and distrust of Hagar's son, whom Sarah regards as a threat to Isaac's position, that makes her desirous of Hagar's and Ishmael's expulsion. I think this interpretation is an androcentric, conventional one. Nowhere do we read of Sarah's fury. On the contrary, Sarah's laughter is explicitly pronounced. There is no necessity to read a conflict between Sarah and Hagar as the reason for Ishmael's dismissal.[3]

The only ground in Genesis 21 for assuming a conflict between the mothers could be Sarah seeing the son of Hagar 'mocking' (21.9). This mocking might rouse Sarah's supposed jealousy.

1. As I argued earlier (1986) by means of a structuralist analysis based on Greimas's concept of isotopy. Abraham's giving of bread and water (v. 14) corresponds to Abraham's party (v. 8); the child given to Hagar (v. 14) corresponds to the child taken from Sarah (v. 8); the dying child (v. 15) to the growing child (v. 8); Hagar's pronouncing the child's death (v. 16) to Sarah's pronouncing the child's birth (v. 7); and Hagar's weeping loudly (v. 16) to Sarah's pronouncing laughter (v. 6). Van Selms (1976: 13) and Speiser (1964: 156) indicate one more parallel: the 'hearing' of Elohim (v. 17), understood as an allusion to Ishmael's name, corresponds to the motivation of Isaac's name (vv. 3-6).

2. The term *unbirth* is inspired by Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass* (in Gardner 1970: 267-68). According to Humpty Dumpty, unbirthday is when it is not your birthday. Here I use the term in a slightly different sense, as an undoing of birth.

3. The commentaries I consulted are Speiser 1964, van Selms 1976 and Westermann 1981. It is disturbing to see that the otherwise interesting study by Hackett (1989), although she exposes at length the negative interpretation of Sarah which the commentaries on Gen. 16 present, still bluntly continues a male interpretation of Gen. 21.1-21, when she says: 'Sarah reacts with harshness and anger'; 'she makes her angry demands to...Abraham', because Ishmael 'threatens the future wealth of her son' (p. 16). While rehabilitating Hagar, Hackett still blames Sarah.

There is, however, an ambiguity in the use of the Hebrew root *ṣḥq*. As well as meaning 'to mock', the *piel* also has sexual overtones, but it can also mean simply 'to play'. Obviously, the use of this root is a wordplay on the name of Isaac, *yiṣḥāq*. Therefore, one might as well say that Sarah does not see the son of Hagar mocking but laughing or, more literally, 'playing (with) Isaac'.

What could be the link between Ishmael's playing (with) Isaac (v. 9) and Sarah's words to Abraham, requesting Hagar's and Ishmael's dismissal (v. 10)? As a matter of fact, Ishmael's playing has no causal effect in the plot. Ishmael's playing is 'only' the 'object' of Sarah's focalization. On the primary level of events, Sarah's act of *seeing*, explicitly stated (v. 9), is itself the crucial event urging Sarah to make her request. The question then is, what is her vision?[1]

Sarah's focalization in v. 10 provides an answer to this question. Here Sarah calls/sees Ishmael as Hagar's son and Isaac as her own son. Now Sarah's vision in v. 9 becomes clear. She sees Ishmael in confused subjectivity: the acting of the son of Hagar and Abraham contains the name of Isaac, the name Abraham and Sarah gave their son in vv. 5-6. Besides, she sees Ishmael as the son of Hagar the Egyptian, that is as son of a different and foreign mother. Sarah's request to Abraham recognizes Abraham as the one responsible for the confusion between Ishmael and Isaac. The sequel in v. 11 shows that Sarah is right: Abraham fails to understand Sarah's point and continues the confusion, as her word displeases him 'because of his son'.[2] Who 'his son' is, remains unclear.

The conflict that underlines the eventual dismissal is not just a Sarah–Hagar conflict. It is a problem of Abraham's, who fails to see the difference between his two sons, a difference caused by their having different mothers. Why then do the commentaries fixate on Sarah's anger, on a conflict between Sarah and

1. For my use of the term 'focalization', see Bal 1985 and 1986b. The chart in appendix I of Bal 1988a (pp. 248-49) is an especially useful means for bringing some structure into the often complex distribution of focalizations in this text.

2. Biblical quotations throughout this article are my own translation.

Hagar? I think that their choice is guided by collating Genesis 21 and Genesis 16, where jealousy between Sarai and Hagar is explicitly mentioned (Gen. 16.5).

Reading Gen. 21.1-21 in the light of Genesis 16 and, as a result, reading a conflict between Sarah and Hagar into Genesis 21, is suspect from a critical point of view. The convention of unity applied here functions to divert attention from the father, Abraham. However, let us take a closer look at father Abraham. An analysis of the focalizations in Genesis 21 shows that, from the point of view of Abraham, both Isaac and Ishmael are considered Abraham's children, whereas from the point of view of Sarah the children belong to Sarah and Hagar respectively. There is in Genesis 21 a tendency to ascribe both children to Abraham—a tendency favoured by the narrator's focalization which coincides with the focalization of Abraham.

Sarah's vision on the one side, and the visions of Abraham and the narrator on the other, are not compatible—not because of some women's quarrel, as the commentaries indicate, but because of the incompatible promises made by Elohim to Abraham as well as to Sarah and Hagar. Let me explain. Elohim has made 'arch-parental' promises to all three of them: Abraham, Sarah and Hagar. Each one was solemnly promised her or his own heir.[1] As it happens, Abraham has two descendants, but only one heir by divine appointment. Now one may formulate Abraham's problem as follows: how can I keep both sons together while giving priority to Isaac, the last-born, as heir?

Sarah is the first to notice this problem. In Gen. 21.10 she says, 'Send away that hand-maiden and her son, because the son of this hand-maiden shall not inherit with my son, with Isaac'. Sarah's words are ambiguous enough, and are as ambiguously explained by Elohim in vv. 12-13. Elohim explains that both children will become a people separately as Abraham's descendants, but that priority is given to Isaac as Abraham's namesake. Now Elohim's interpretation of Sarah's words

1. To Abraham a heir was promised in Gen. 17.1-3; 22.17; to Sarah in 17.16; to Hagar in 16.10-12 (in a formula analogous to 22.17, and confirmed in 17.20 and in 21.18).

carefully avoids the point Sarah makes: that inheritance has to do with one's mother! Ishmael will receive his inheritance when he is with his mother, therefore he has to be sent away together with his mother. Isaac will receive his inheritance when he stays with Sarah. (And, at the same time, an ideology is reinforced according to which real inheritance has to do with one's father.) Only by sending Hagar and Ishmael away can Elohim's promises to Hagar and Sarah (and Abraham) be fulfilled.

Elohim's promise to Hagar is repeated in v. 18. The events from v. 18 onward are described as an inversion of Ishmael's *unbirth* (vv. 14-17). Besides, they reflect the sequence of events told at Isaac's *birth* (vv. 6-8). By means of this narrative strategy, Ishmael's unbirth is undone. We may call vv. 19-20 the story of Ishmael's *rebirth*.[1] The effect of this rebirth is admittedly that Ishmael becomes the latter-born, but also that Hagar is the only one in charge of her child. When Hagar gave birth to Ishmael, she did so within a patriarchal context. Now she is, in a sense, 'set free' by Sarah. Her son, whom she bore to Abram (Gen. 16.10), is 'unborn' by the failing of the means of living provided by Abraham (Gen. 21.15). Ishmael is 'reborn' by her own means; afterwards she takes him a woman from her own country, Egypt (v. 21). Sarah's words become true: the sons do not inherit together; separately, however, they do. Sarah, therefore, may well be called a prophetess.[2]

Sarah's words in Gen. 21.10 enable us to look at the narrated events from her perspective. From Sarah's point of view the story of Gen. 21.1-21 can be regarded as representing a tradition

1. See again Troost 1986. To specify the most important parallels: Elohim's acting towards Hagar (v. 19) corresponds to Elohim acting towards Sarah (v. 6, embedded) and Hagar's sitting and raising her voice (v. 16). Hagar's giving of water (v. 19) corresponds to Sarah's giving of milk (v. 7, embedded) and to Hagar's pronouncing of the child's death (v. 16). The child's growth (v. 20) corresponds to the child's growth (v. 8) and the child's death (v. 15).

2. It is worth noting that the Babylonian Talmud mentions Sarah as one of the seven prophetesses precisely because of this verse (Gen. 21.10; *b. Meg.* 14a on 'And the king removed his ring'). The seven prophetesses mentioned are Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Hanna, Abigail, Hulda and Esther (Epstein 1938: 80-84).

in which children do belong to their mothers, and in which mothers do decide about their and their children's conditions of living. Departing from Sarah's prophetic words in v. 10, we may construct a story in which Sarah is archmother to Isaac, in accordance with divine promise. Similarly Hagar appears as archmother to Ishmael, also according to divine promise. By being expelled, Hagar actually gains her freedom and independence.[1] A crucial moment in this story of archmothers is Abraham's unwillingness to let go of either son. Sarah's words to Abraham, and Elohim's confirmation of Sarah's words, enable Hagar to live with Ishmael and find him a wife from her own country.[2]

Father's Inheritance: The Children of the Lost Mother

Let us now turn to the parable of the Prodigal or Lost Son in Lk. 15.11-32. This parable is commonly considered as an intertext of those Genesis narratives in which two children are substituted for each other by means of a reversal, such as the stories of Isaac and Ishmael (Gen. 21) or of Jacob and Esau (Gen. 27).[3] I suggest

1. One may think of Gen. 3 as an instance in which expulsion also means independence. J. Cheryl Exum (1985: 77) draws our attention to the parallel between Gen. 16 and the exodus story. According to Exum the story of Hagar is a reversal of the exodus paradigm: the Egyptian escapes oppression by Israel. The comparison can be extended to Gen. 21.1-21 through an interesting detail: the use of the verb *šlk* both in Hagar's leaving her child (Gen. 21.15) and Pharaoh's ordering the exposure of all new-born boys (Cogan 1968).

2. Since the fulfilment of Elohim's promises to Sarah and Hagar is as significant as the fulfilment of Elohim's promises to Abraham, defining this story as part of an Abraham cycle (as, e.g., Westermann does in his commentary on Genesis [1981]) can be considered a reading convention. E. Sue Campbell has adduced sufficient and convincing instances of a Sarah cycle as the inversion of the Abram-cycle, 'bridged only by the laughter surrounding the annunciation and birth of their son Isaac' (1989).

3. See Derret 1967: 68-70; Scott 1977: 62; and Bovon 1975: 303. Other stories in which the younger brother is given preference over the older are, e.g., Cain and Abel, Joseph and his brothers and, in the New Testament, Jesus and John. York (1991) examines the reversals in Luke,

that these stories be classified as a substitution by reversal paradigm.

The substitution by reversal paradigm, as I see it, is stereotyped by a master-plot, in which two children (or two groups of children) change places in relation to their father. Their substitution is acted out through a reference to their mothers by means of various literary strategies, especially the 'annunciation type-scene' (Fuchs 1985) and the 'Birth of the Hero Paradigm' (Brenner 1986). The plot is characterized by a problematical relationship between the father and his heir, but usually ends up by the father's accepting the younger son by means of an enacted fatherly rebirth of the younger son. The clearly dichotomous structure of the stories representing this paradigm facilitates their use as ideo-stories (in the sense described by Bal 1988a: 11), that is, as stories that may be used to express and legitimate cultural processes.

Reading Lk. 15.11-32 as an instance of the substitution by reversal paradigm is illuminating. In Luke's parable the younger son indeed seems to be preferred to the elder son. On his return the younger son is received with all the wealthy emblems of a rich *kyrios*—a gown, sandals, a ring, the slaughtering of a fatted calf and a large banquet—while the elder son does not even receive a kid to enjoy with his friends.

On closer examination of the parable, there is in fact no reversal at all. Both sons are treated equally by their father. The father divides his inheritance between them both (Lk. 15.12). Indeed, the point of Luke's parable lies exactly in the absence of a reversal.[1] The comparison of the parable with the reversal

among others in Lk. 15.11-32 (pp. 145-54). York does not go into the diffuse intertexts (pp. 148-49 n. 5) because he concentrates on theological reversals.

In the traditional *Missale Romanum*, Gen. 27 (on Jacob and Esau) and Lk. 15.11-32 were read on the same day, the Saturday after the second Sunday in the Forty Days.

1. Many biblical scholars, who actually do notice the absence of a reversal in this parable, fail to draw the relevant conclusions. Instead they shift towards a Christian message of the 'loving father', who is supposed to provide a solution to the struggle between the two brothers. In this way those scholars even create another reversal, by declaring the

paradigm in regard to an actual reversal between the two sons is untenable. Nevertheless, there are some similarities between Luke's parable on the one hand, and the stories in the Hebrew Bible that represent the reversal paradigm on the other hand.

Both in Luke 15 and in Genesis 21 there is a strong tendency of attribution of sons to the father, and of an appropriation of the sons by the father.[1] This tendency seems to reach a dramatic climax in Luke's parable. The younger son 'perishes' with hunger; in v. 17c the Greek text can be rendered by a passive form: 'I am killed by famine'.[2] This interpretation is reinforced by the father's exclamation upon receiving his younger son, 'my son here was dead, but he has come to life again'—an exclamation made twice (Lk. 15.24b, 32). Then the father orders a meal to be prepared. So, just like in Genesis, we may recognize in Luke's parable an *unbirth* and a *rebirth* of a child—this time, however, without a mother's intervention. The convention applied in Luke's parable is one of a father accepting his son and considering this moment as the real birth of his son. Just as in Genesis 21, this moment in Luke is sealed by the father's focalizing the younger son as his own ('this is my son', v. 24b), followed by a large banquet.

On the basis of these similarities, I suggest that we regard the reversal paradigm as a common subtext for both Luke 15 and Genesis 21. From this point of view, there are some striking characteristics in Luke's parable. As I have already said, in Luke 15 an actual reversal is absent; but the mother, prominent in Genesis 21 and 27, is absent too. In fact, the parable's construction is almost entirely male-dominated.

The presence of women is indicated only in the words of the elder son to his father on the younger son's return, but in a specific sense. He says that the younger son has been with *pornai* (v. 30), commonly translated 'with harlots'. Now, this is a strange remark, for where does the elder son get that

elder son the real 'lost son' because he does not recognize the father's love (Jeremias 1962: 128; Marshall 1978: 604; Fitzmyer 1985: 1084-85; Scobel 1988: 57-64).

1. As Daniel Patte shows with regard to Lk. 15.11-32 in his analysis of this parable (1976a: 101-102).

2. As Patte (1976a: 90) explains.

information? The *pornai* do not figure in the story told by the narrator about the younger son's absence. Clearly, we face an interpretation problem here.[1]

The commentaries I consulted either do not solve this problem, or else they apply a psychological code when indicating that the elder son's jealousy produced in his mind imaginary *pornai*. But even then, the commentaries fail to see the strong androcentric convention of opposition used by the elder son through linking himself with his father, while ascribing to his younger brother some negatively valued preoccupation with women.[2]

For these reasons, namely the absence of a mother together with the male conventions of fatherly birthgiving and pejorative alignment with women, I recognize in this parable a male voice, a male variant on the reversal paradigm. Through the father's very denial of a reversal in Luke's parable, it can be assumed that the parable is a conscious adaptation and revision of the reversal paradigm. While Luke reproduces the ideology of Gen. 21.1-21, according to which the father's acceptance is a child's real birth, the ideology according to which the last born becomes the first is apparently absent.[3]

Luke's parable can be interpreted as a Christian variation on the reversal paradigm. In Luke 15 a gendered, patriarchal code is highlighted with the function of defending a thematic code of unity: the unity between rich people and those who are in need, or the unity between Christians and Jews, is represented by both sons before one Father. Therefore, some scholars propose to call

1. The problem is solved by two Old Syriac versions, the Sinaitic (fourth–fifth century) and the Curetonian (fifth century), by adding *metà pornōn* in v. 13. The Curetonian Syriac reads: 'and [he] went to a far country, and there he scattered his property in foods which are not fitting, because he was living wastefully with harlots [*zānīthē*]' (Burkitt 1904: 352-53). The Syriac *zānīthā* is cognate with the Hebrew verb *zānâ*.

2. The commentaries I consulted are Klostermann 1975; Marshall 1978; and Fitzmyer 1985.

3. Luke's parable therefore cannot be seen as a legitimation of the Christian claim to be the True Israel (as has been done by the Church Fathers; cf. Derrett 1970).

this parable 'The Parable of the Father's Love'.[1]

Can we represent the story of women that this parable (of 'The Father's Love') leaves unrepresented, but that is nevertheless implied? Can we reread this parable as if it were a woman's story? An important characteristic of the reversal stories is the role that is ascribed to the mother. Could this not provide a clue from which to start a rereading of the story of 'The Lost Mother'? I will explore the possibility of such a rereading in the remainder of this essay.[2]

It may be argued that in Luke's parable both sons have had their share of their father's inheritance precisely by being separated. This would be a reflection of the situation in Genesis 21, where both sons inherit separately. If this is the case, the prophetic words of Sarah in Gen. 21.10 can be read as a prolepsis to Luke's parable. Sarah's perception that the two boys would not inherit together becomes true in Luke 15, where the two sons inherit because of the younger son's departure. In this interpretation the parable of Luke 15 confirms both sons as equals in their father's inheritance, seemingly because of the father's loving capacities but in fact because of their having been first separated.

A difference between Genesis 21 and Luke 15 is that, unlike in Gen. 21.11, this time the father is willing to let his son go (although the parable does not say so). Still, as in Gen. 21.11, the father does not see the distinction which the elder son in Lk. 15.29-30 is so acutely aware of; namely that, by leaving the father, the younger son strives towards independence. Another difference between Genesis 21 and Luke 15 is that, in the latter, the younger son fails and returns to his father. The question now arises: why has he failed?

In order to find an answer to this question we should first ask, where has the younger son been? His elder brother seems to know: the younger brother has been with *pornai*. As we have

1. E.g. Patte 1976a: 140-41, following Jeremias 1962: 128.

2. The intertexts that are usually traced by biblical scholars—such as Hellenistic rhetoric, Gnostic parallels, or rabbinic parallels—are either too general, or else confirm the male dominance in this parable. Parallels are listed by Aus (1985) and Derrett (1970).

seen, the *pornai* are a strange element in this story. To maintain, however, that these *pornai* are only the product of the elder brother's mind will not do. Precisely because *pornai* functions as a condemnation and outlet for the elder brother's jealousy, it may be assumed that the term must be more important than its interpretation as mere fantasy will allow.

The term *pornai* may be understood as a metaphor, pointing to a certain reality, or way of living, in the distant country. Although this reality is negatively valued in the elder brother's vision, we can try to appreciate it neutrally as a reality worthy of the elder brother's jealousy. In order to elaborate this yet 'foreign' side of the metaphor, we could take recourse to those biblical passages in which the term *pornē* is used in a similarly metaphorical fashion.

The way in which the terms *pornē* and, more generally, *porneia* are used as metaphors in prophetic discourse provides us with an additional intertext. In prophetic discourse *pornē* is a privileged metaphor for leaving the house of the father and turning one's back on religious laws (e.g. Jer. 3.1–4.4). It is also a metaphor for going to strange countries (e.g. Ezek. 16.26; 23). Finally, as van Dijk-Hemmes (1989a) has convincingly argued, in prophetic language *porneia* is a metaphor for women's religious traditions, as Hosea's perversion of the tradition of the Song of Songs illustrates (especially Hos. 2).[1]

In all these cases *porneia* has a negative connotation which, in itself, already betrays male interpretation. I propose to forget the devaluative overtones of *porneia* and to reread Lk. 15.11-32 'as if' *porneia* was meant as a metaphor for women's traditions (see above).

1. In the LXX *pornē* is the usual translation for the Hebrew verb *zānâ*. According to Bird (1989) the book of Hosea represents the earliest metaphorical use of this verb. On the use of *zānâ* in prophetic discourse, especially Hosea, see Setel 1985. For Hos. 2 as a rewriting of texts from the Song of Songs, see van Dijk-Hemmes (1989a; 1989c; 1991: 206-16). For the Song of Songs as a text from women's tradition, see Bekkenkamp 1986; Bekkenkamp and van Dijk 1987 (reprinted in *A Feminist Companion to the Song of Songs*, pp. 67-85); Brenner 1989a; and van Dijk-Hemmes 1991. On the negative connotations of *zānâ* and *zônâ* by male interpretation in Judges, see Bal 1988a.

Leaving the father and the religious laws is what the younger brother does—going to a distant country and feeding the swine.[1] Living with women is what the younger brother does, according to his elder brother. From the perspective of my rereading of Genesis 21, I suggest that we should read *pornai* as a metonymy, pointing towards living within a women's tradition. Accordingly, I think that the younger son has indeed been living with the women so thoroughly excluded from the scene represented in the parable.

Living conditions in the distant country do not seem favourable. The younger brother is pressed to go home by a great famine (v. 14). Is this the reason for the younger brother's failure? That is not very convincing, as there is still food left even for the pigs. The real problem arises from the inadequacy of the younger brother's share of his father's inheritance. Let us take a closer look at this inheritance. The Greek text twice uses the word *bios* (vv. 12, 30), literally 'life', commonly translated by 'property' because of the context. If we take the text at face value and translate *bios* with 'life' or '(way of) living', there might be an explanation for the son's failure and return other than spent property and his starving to death.

The '(way of) living' that the son has inherited from his father makes him incapable of finding a living in the distant country, where living is different. This situation reminds us of the inadequacy of the means of living provided by Abraham in Gen. 21.15. The younger brother ends up by keeping swine, an activity that forms an alienation from his inherited way of living. The keeping of swine can be regarded as a metaphor for his failure. Unlike in Gen. 21.17-19, there is no one to intervene on the younger brother's behalf, be it God or his mother, no one to enable him to find a *bios*, a living. The younger brother intervenes himself (v. 17a). He addresses himself as he chooses to go back to his father, whom he afterwards links with God (v. 21).

The children of Sarah and Hagar succeeded in inheriting independently because of the intervention of their respective mothers. The inheritance of the sons of 'the loving father' is

1. Keeping swine is 'unclean' in terms of religious laws; cf. Lev. 11.7; Deut. 14.8.

insufficient to sustain their independence; this time the mother is really lost.

This conclusion parallels in a way traditional male interpretations of the parable, but the 'reading as if' makes a difference. If the father in Luke can indeed be interpreted as an image of God, as is done by the younger son and as the larger narrative embedding of the parable indicates, then a 'reading as if' criticizes the exclusive image of God as Father. One of the conclusions was that the younger son appeared to be unable to become independent. His father's inheritance did not provide him with the means for finding a living. This interpretation runs counter to conventional views upheld by modern readers that, for a son, staying with his mother will mean dependence, whereas identifying with his father will guarantee him individuation.

An 'as if' reading of both texts (Genesis 21 and Luke 15) uncovers traces of differently gendered voices. It makes clear that real independence can sometimes be reached by leaving the father, whose inheritance is inadequate. In Genesis 21 staying with the mother enables inheritance and, at least for Ishmael, the earning of a living. In Luke 15 his ties to the Father inhibit the younger son from finding a living.

I am fully aware that my proposed rereading could be pushed further. Further research can and should be done, especially on the context of the *pornai* in Lk. 15.30.[1] This would be, however, beyond the scope of this article. Here I intended primarily to investigate whether biblical texts, thought to be entirely androcentric, are indeed 'male' in all layers and in all aspects.

Reading as a woman, departing from a body of women's texts, the androcentricity of a text like Gen. 21.1-21 appeared to be partly the result of 'male' reading conventions. In Genesis 21 we encountered a text echoing voices from women's traditions, from which we could produce open-ended conventions. On the other hand, reading conventions tend to continue 'male' textual conventions, as was especially the case in Lk. 15.11-32. There, the androcentric text itself appeared to be, to a large extent, 'male' interpretation. Reading the parable 'as if' it were part of

1. Research on this subject should include the interesting Qumrân text 4Q184.1.

Sarah's and Hagar's story, we tried to 'get behind' this 'male' interpretation. The result was a rereading of Lk. 15.11-32 and of our own cultural conventions as well. In answer to my initial question, then, to a certain extent, a reader can decide what is *in* the text. The decision will, however, always be *our* decision, which implies that it brings home our own conventions as well.

Structure, Ideology and Politics in the Biblical Betrothal Type-Scene*

Esther Fuchs

A consideration of betrothal type-scenes, based on the order of their presentation in the Hebrew Bible, reveals a shift in focus from bride to bridegroom and a marked decrease in the bride's status on the level of representational reality. I would like to suggest that this development constitutes a literary strategy of biblical patriarchal ideology, the purpose of which is to neutralize, legitimate and promote the legally subordinate position of women. While the legal and social status of biblical women has received scholarly attention in recent years (Bird 1974; Otwell 1977; Swidler 1979; Ochshorn 1981), and while other studies have focused on the literary representation of women in the Bible (Trible 1976; Williams 1981), little has been done to clarify the interdependence of the literary and the ideological aspects of the biblical representation of women. On the other hand, literary analyses of biblical narratives, especially those involving women, have by and large ignored the didactic implications of these narratives, notably in the context of the Bible's patriarchal ideology, which sanctions the social and political subservience of women to men. The present examination of the literary presentation of biblical betrothal type-scenes is a suggestive sketch of the way in which motifs, plot structure, characterization, and their orchestration, can be read as reflection of social environment.

The thematic structure of the betrothal type-scene consists,

* This article is based on my paper, 'From Partner to Chattel: The Changing Faces of the Biblical Bride', delivered at the 1983 annual convention of the Society of Biblical Literature

mutatis mutandis, of the encounter of the prospective groom and bride by a well, the act of drawing water, the swift communication of the encounter to the bride's family, followed by a festive meal and a betrothal agreement (Alter 1981: 52; Culley 1976: 41-43).

The first betrothal type-scene is the longest and most elaborate. Taking up most of Genesis 24, it relates in great detail the circumstances surrounding the betrothal of Isaac and Rebekah. The pace of plot development is slowed down by the repetition of phrases, the detailed description of action, and the frequent recurrence of discourse. For example, Rebekah's act of offering water to Abraham's servant and then of watering his camels is repeated four times. It first appears as a projected act in the servant's prayer to Yahweh (Gen. 24.14), and next as a real action (vv. 18-20). The third time it appears in the servant's dialogue with Rebekah's family (vv. 43-44) as a reported projected act; and, finally, it appears as a reported real action in the same dialogue (vv. 45-46).

One function of this fourfold repetition is to emphasize that the encounter with Rebekah and the consequent betrothal are divinely sanctioned. It also stresses Rebekah's generosity and kindness by juxtaposing the servant's hopes and Rebekah's actual response. For instance, although he had planned to ask her just to 'tilt' or 'lower' her jar, and then proceeded to ask her only for 'a little water' to drink or sip, 'she hastened to let down her jar upon her hand, and let him drink' (Gen. 24.18). Rebekah is quick to respond to the stranger's request and answers with politeness and courtesy, calling the stranger 'my lord'. She spares no effort; instead of merely tilting her jar to let him sip 'a little water', she takes it down to him; and instead of just handing it over, she holds it in her hand, allows him to drink, and waits until he is satiated. In addition, she not only offers *some* water to the servant's camels, but 'hastens' to draw and provide water for them until they, too, have drunk their fill.

Rebekah's attributes are also seen in a favorable light when contrasted with those of her brother Laban. Whereas Rebekah provides water to one who she perceives is a stranger, and expects no reward in return, Laban reacts only upon learning that the man in question is wealthy and therefore worthy of

attention: 'When he saw the ring, and the bracelet on his sister's arms...he said: "Come in, blessed of the Lord; why do you stand outside? For I have cleared the house, and made room for the camels"' (vv. 30-31). The temporal clause preceding Laban's rather sententious welcome establishes an unmistakable causal link between his show of hospitality and his ulterior motives. Furthermore, whereas Rebekah assures the servant that he will not be imposing, as they have 'straw and provender enough and room to lodge in' (v. 25), Laban stresses that room had to be made for the guest and his retinue, thus hinting that his efforts should not go unrewarded.

It should not elude us, however, that Rebekah's actions imply receptivity, acquiescence and obedience. She not only consents to water the servant's camels, but accepts her family's judgment—or, more specifically, that of her father and brother—and agrees to follow the servant to another country to meet her future husband. In this respect Rebekah fits the mold of the biblical heroine, as I have shown elsewhere (Fuchs 1982). It should also be noted that all three speech acts attributed to Rebekah amount to positive responses to the servant's questions and requests. Thus they do not transcend the limits of female discourse as described by James Williams (1982: 37-38). Even Rebekah, the most talkative of biblical brides, is not permitted to control a narrating speech, the most authoritative of reported discourses.

Neither should it elude us that, despite Isaac's peripheral role in the scene, it is he who dominates its ending, as he meets Rebekah, brings her into his mother's tent and takes her as his wife. In the represented interaction of bride and bridegroom, the former becomes a prized object, received and managed by the latter. Syntactically, Isaac is the subject of three consecutive transitive verbs ('brought', 'took', 'loved'), while Rebekah serves as their direct object (v. 67). The ending also omits any reference to the bride's emotional attitude toward her groom, focusing instead on her role within the framework of his life. Rebekah is allowed to outshine Abraham's servant and her brother, but her autonomy and activity diminish considerably in the context of her interaction with her future husband. Nevertheless, Rebekah remains the most active, assertive and talkative female in the

betrothal type-scene. As Alter suggests, Rebekah's central role in this scene 'foreshadows her important role as the shrewdest and the most potent of the matriarchs' (Williams 1982: 54).

The second betrothal type-scene, involving Jacob and Rachel, contains most of the conventional motifs mentioned in the first one, but is markedly different. It is much more limited in its narrative span, taking up a mere seventeen verses in Genesis 29, compared to the fifty-seven verses taken up by the previous scene. In addition, the second scene is dominated throughout by Jacob's point of view, and emphasizes his qualities rather than those of his bride.

Just as Rebekah makes her appearance as soon as the servant has completed his prayer to Yahweh, so does Rachel appear only after Jacob has questioned the shepherds about Laban. Instead of introducing the bride, as the first type-scene does, the text continues to focus on Jacob's actions and feelings—on the warm welcome he extends to Rachel and on his mighty act of rolling a heavy stone off the well. The information the scene offers about Rachel is limited to her kinship to Laban and Jacob, and to her appearance: 'Rachel was of beautiful form and beautiful to look at' (Gen. 29.17). The reference to Rachel's beauty occurs in the context of Jacob's request for her hand in marriage, and serves to explain his preference for her over her sister, rather than to introduce her as an autonomous character. In contrast to her dynamic predecessor, who draws water both for herself and for others, Rachel allows Jacob to draw water for her sheep. Her passivity and weakness act as a foil for Jacob's resourcefulness and physical strength. The text stresses that the heavy stone upon the well usually requires the collaboration of several shepherds in order for it to be removed (Gen. 29.2-3, 8). It is possible that Rachel's appearance inspires Jacob to remove the stone singlehandedly, but she herself does not undertake any action, or express any thought or emotion of her own.

While Jacob dominates the scene, Rachel is not allowed to control even a single verse. She is tucked away, as it were, as the subject of subordinate clauses (Gen. 29.6, 9, 12, 16, 17), or else functions as a direct object (vv. 10-12, 18-19). The three intransitive verbs she controls as subject are 'come', 'run' and

'tell', which evoke the role of a messenger. And indeed Rachel serves as little more than a hyphen between Jacob and Laban. As soon as Laban appears on the scene, Rachel disappears; the narrative focus shifts from Jacob and the shepherds to Jacob and Laban.

Another example of decrease in the biblical bride's status occurs in the second betrothal type-scene, when the bride's father and her prospective husband are shown to conclude a betrothal agreement without so much as informing the bride. While it is true that, in the first scene, Rebekah does not participate in the betrothal treaty concluded between Abraham's servant and her family, she is at least summoned and consulted when the servant insists he must leave with the bride immediately (Gen. 24.56). In the second pact, Rachel figures as a prize to be exchanged for the groom's services. When she does not appear as the object of Jacob's attention, she is presented in conjunction with her sister Leah, and this portrayal of Rachel as half of a unit of two daughters foreshadows her marital status as only part of a polygamous unit. She may be the beloved bride and later the preferred co-wife, but she will never be the exclusive wife, a fact that later will deeply affect her status and power relations with her husband.

The third betrothal type-scene involves Moses and Zipporah, and reflects a further reduction into the status of the bride, as well as in the status of the betrothal scene in general. The third scene is shorter and more compact than the previous one, taking up a mere five verses (Exod. 2.16-21), and is compressed within the story of Israel's oppression by Pharaoh and of Moses' preparation for national leadership. The limited narrative span that this betrothal type-scene occupies in the Moses cycle reflects the peripheral role of both wife and marriage in the leader's life.

Like the previous type-scene, this one manipulates the conventional motifs, and for two major purposes: to reveal Yahweh's continued interest in the hero, and to justify this interest by presenting the heroic features of the divinely designated man. The conduct of Moses by the well suggests that he is divinely empowered as, alone, he faces a group of inimical shepherds who are keeping Reuel's daughters from watering

their father's flock (Exod. 2.17). Moses' intervention on behalf of the helpless girls is consistent with his intervention on behalf of the Hebrew underdogs, described in the preceding episode (Exod. 2.11-14). It also foreshadows the success of his confrontation with Pharaoh as the leader of his oppressed people. The text brings out Moses' heroic characteristics by detailing the different stages and aspects of his actions; Moses is said to 'stand up', 'rescue' the girls, and 'water' Reuel's flock. This is repeated for emphasis in the girls' report to their father about their wondrous rescuer.

The scene's relentless focus on the character of the bridegroom visibly diminishes the role of the bride. Although Moses is presented at this point as a vagabond and an empty-handed foreigner, he is far more powerful than the daughters of the respectable native priest, Reuel. The girls are shown to be not only physically powerless, but even lacking the resourcefulness of their predecessor, Rachel. Unlike Rebekah and Rachel, who hurry to report to their respective families on the encounter with the stranger at the well, Reuel's daughters fail either to thank the stranger or volunteer any information once they are home. The scene all but ignores the relationship between bride and bridegroom, and proceeds directly with the relationship of the bridegroom and his future father-in-law: 'And Moses was content to dwell with the man, and he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter' (Exod. 2.21). Unlike the previous scene, in which Jacob's desire for Rachel is listed as the primary motivation for their marriage, here the betrothal is more a product of the men's mutual trust and friendship. Zipporah's feelings and thoughts, her appearance, or even the feelings she might have evoked in Moses, are unknown. The scene does not distinguish her from her other sisters by noting her conduct or looks; neither does it explain why Reuel chooses her over her sisters as Moses' bride.

The diminishing role of the bride on the representational level indicates a steady development in the biblical narrative toward de-emphasizing the status and the significance of the bride vis-à-vis her future husband, the biblical hero. The decreasing narrative span of the betrothal scene and, more significantly, its absence from contexts that would seem to require its presentation (i.e., the betrothals of judges, kings and prophets), imply

that not only the bride, but the act of betrothal itself appears to be less and less significant for the divinely appointed heroes of Israel, as well as for the biblical text. The acquisition of a bride becomes an act increasingly taken for granted, and one whose importance is eclipsed by other events.

A closer look at the betrothal scenes themselves reveals an important discrepancy in the way they function for the bride and for the groom. For the groom, the betrothal type-scene signals his initiation into adult independence and autonomy. The preceding scenes have presented him as a dependent or undependable youth, or as both at once. Isaac is portrayed as Abraham's son, dependent for his very life on his father's will (Gen. 22); Rebekah's son Jacob is shown obeying her advice and following his father's order (Gen. 28.1-5); and Moses is shown as a rather brash lad, acting on impulse and risking his life in his confrontation with the Egyptian taskmaster and the Hebrew slave (Exod. 2.11-15).

The betrothal type-scene, from the bride's perspective, is merely her transposition from her father's custody to her husband's custody; and although the dramatic scenes do not clarify the legal terms of the engagement, they still reflect the basic legal reality empowering the father to dispose of his daughter as he sees fit. Even in the first betrothal scene, with its exceptional description of the bride's personality, it is after all Rebekah's father and brother who make the decision to transfer her to Isaac: 'Then Laban and Bethuel answered... "Behold, Rebekah is before you, *take* her and go, and let her be the wife of your master's son, as the Lord has spoken"' (Gen. 24.50-51; emphasis added). While the bridegroom's representative here 'takes' (*lqḥ*) (24.37, 38, 51), her father (and brother) 'give' (*ntn*) (24.41) the bride to him. These terms recur in all the betrothal narratives, reflecting the bride's subservient status vis-à-vis her father and future husband; she is, clearly, the object of the transaction.

The bride is not merely shown as a transferable object; she is often characterized as a prized object whose acquisition exacts a price from the bridegroom. The value of the biblical bride is determined in purely androcentric terms—for instance, according to her virginity and good looks (Gen. 24.16 and 29.17). While

the betrothal type-scene makes no reference to the groom's looks or virginity, it ascribes them to the bride as signifiers of her special value.

Although the financial component in the first betrothal type-scene is underplayed in comparison with the element of divine intervention, its role is unmistakable. Abraham's servant is shown to give Rebekah expensive jewels as a spontaneous token of gratitude for her generosity; nevertheless one can speculate that the jewels' impact on her family does not entirely escape him. And indeed, the text does not fail to register the effect they produce on Rebekah's brother (Gen. 24.30). Later, as the servant describes Abraham's great wealth, he alludes to the lucrative aspect of the proposal he offers to the Nahor clan: 'The Lord has greatly blessed my master, and he has become great. He has given me flocks and herds, silver and gold, servants and maids and camels and donkeys' (Gen. 24.30).

The second type-scene presents the financial aspect not as incidental to the agreement, but as its underlying *raison d'être*. Jacob states rather clearly that instead of wages, he prefers to receive Rachel in return for his labor: 'I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter, Rachel' (Gen. 29.18). The betrothal agreement becomes exploitative when Laban gives him Leah, and requires seven additional years of labor in return for Rachel (Gen. 29.27). What the text implicitly censures, however, is Laban's deceptive treatment of Jacob, and not the fact that he bargains over his own daughters. The scene does not question the fundamentally economic nature of the agreement, nor the fact that brides are treated as chattel.

John Otwell has suggested that the biblical narrative does not present marriage as a transaction in which a bride is sold to a prospective husband, but rather as 'a fusion of the families involved' (Otwell 1977: 39). This argument is based on the alleged heterogeneity of betrothal and marriage patterns depicted in the biblical narrative. But, as I have tried to demonstrate here, the variations on the basic structure of the betrothal transaction are ancillary to its underlying principle, which defines the bride as her groom's chattel.

The structure and representational order of biblical betrothal type-scenes confirm the patriarchal message conveyed by the

characterization of the biblical heroine (Fuchs 1982), and by the wife–sister and widow redemption type-scenes, which I shall not be able to analyze here. The thematic and compositional variations notwithstanding, all these type-scenes legitimate the subordination of the wife by her husband.

BINDER, TRICKSTER, HEEL AND HAIRY-MAN: REREADING GENESIS 27 AS A TRICKSTER TALE TOLD BY A WOMAN

Adrien Janis Bledstein

'How little we know, or care, about the personality of Isaac!', exclaims Harold Bloom in *The Book of J* (1990: 195), his exploration of a hypothesis for a woman narrator in the Bible. Like many readers, Bloom sees Isaac as a weak link between Abraham and Jacob, a passive victim duped by his wife and son.[1] E.A. Speiser agrees that Isaac was deceived, and presents a careful scholarly reading of Genesis 27 from the assumed view that we are hearing a male narrator:

> The author himself, by dealing so sensitively with the hapless plight in which Isaac and Esau find themselves through no fault of their own (cf. especially vss. 33-38), demonstrates beyond any doubt that his personal sympathies are with the victims. It is, furthermore, a fact that Jacob himself did not think up the scheme; he acted, though not without remonstrance and uneasiness, under pressure from his strong-willed mother; and he had to pay for his misdeed with twenty years of exile! (1964: 211).

Poor fellows! I wonder, however, if Isaac may be understood to be a trickster-type character. In her book *Underdogs and Tricksters: A Prelude to Biblical Folklore*, Susan Niditch points out that Isaac deceives Abimelech in Genesis 26 and the deception is uncovered, a pattern that is characteristic of

1. J. Cheryl Exum and William Whedbee (1990) portray Isaac as 'the most comical of Israel's ancestors' (p. 123), characterizing him as 'typically an innocent, passive man and [who] is set up again and again—a classic half-pathetic, half-humorous dupe' (p. 131).

trickster tales (1987: 51). Nonetheless, she reads Isaac as an underdog and thinks he is deceived by Jacob who, she and others agree, is himself a trickster figure (p. 99). In contrast, I suggest that Isaac, *yiṣḥāq*, may be translated 'Trickster'.

Translating the story's other Hebrew names, 'Binder' (arising from the root *rbq*, 'tying fast'; BDB, 918) is Rebekah; 'Heel' is Jacob (from *'āqēb*); and 'Hairy-man' is Esau. I therefore recommend that we read Genesis 27 as a Hebrew form of trickster tale, with Isaac as the arch trickster.

In the ancient Near East gods and goddesses use trickster means to get their way. For example, in the wrestlings of Horus and Seth, trickery is used in an effort to determine who will be king of the gods in Egypt. Among Sumerians, Inanna wins the divine *me* from her father Enki (Fontaine 1988).[1]

Let us imagine that the Genesis narrator is a Hebrew woman who believes that YHWH alone is ruler of Judah–Israel, and that her intent is to satirize humans who behave like the gods and goddesses of non-Hebrews. In particular, she cleverly prods men who wield power.

Understood from the point of view of a woman's wit, the tale becomes an ingenious succession narrative, in which Trickster's anxieties about his health lead him to raise the issue of passing on the blessing to his favorite son. This mobilizes the mother, Binder, whose manipulation to have Heel blessed presents the Trickster with the possibility of testing each son: of the two, who is both clever and persistent enough to handle the blessing?

I first present a translation of the text, based on the New Jewish Version but modified. My interpretation follows the translation. The titles of sections of Gen. 26.34–28.9 correspond to the section titles of my rendition. I then consider imagining the storyteller as a woman with a mature sense of humor which encompasses an appreciation of human frailty.

1. In Hebrew matriarchal-patriarchal stories, it is vulnerable humans who use trickster means.

Translation

Choosing a Successor

26.34When Hairy-man (Esau) was forty years old, he took to wife Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite; 35and they were a bitterness of spirit to Trickster (Isaac) and Binder (Rebekah). 27.1And because Trickster was old and his eyes dim from seeing, he called Hairy-man his son, the elder, and said to him, 'My Son', 2and he said to him, 'Here I am'. And he said, 'Please note that I am old, and I do not know the day of my death. 3Now, please take your gear, your quiver and bow, and go out into the open and hunt me some game. 4Then prepare a dish for me such as I like, and bring it to me to eat, so that my soul may bless you before I die.' 5And Binder heard when Trickster spoke to his son Hairy-man and Hairy-man went out to the field to hunt some game to bring. 6So Binder said to Heel (Jacob) her son, saying, 'Pay attention, I heard your father speaking to your brother Hairy-man, saying,7"Bring me some game and prepare a dish for me to eat that I may bless you before YHWH before I die". 8Now, my son, listen to my voice to what I instruct you. 9Go please to the flock and take from there two choice kids, and I will make of them a dish for your father, such as he likes. 10Then take it to your father to eat, in order that he may bless you before he dies.' 11Heel answered his mother Binder, 'Look, my brother Hairy-man is a hairy man and I am smooth-skinned. 12Perhaps my father will touch me, I shall appear to him as a trickster and bring upon myself a curse, not a blessing.' 13But his mother said to him, 'On me be your curse, my son. Just do as I say. Go. Take for me.'

The Testing of Heel

14And he went and took and brought to his mother, and his mother prepared a dish such as his father liked. 15Binder then took the best clothes of her son Hairy-man, the elder, which were with her in the house, and dressed her son Heel, the younger, 16and she covered his hands and the hairless part of his neck with the skins of the kids. 17Then she put in the hands of her son Heel the dish and the bread that she had prepared. 18So he comes to his father and says, 'My father'. And he said, 'Here I am. Who are you, my son?' 19And Heel responds to his father, 'I am Hairy-man, your first-born; I have done as you told me. Please sit up and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me.' 20And Trickster said to his son, 'How did you succeed so quickly, my son?' and he said, 'Because YHWH your Divinity caused the right thing to occur'. 21Trickster said to Heel, 'Please come closer that I may feel you, my son—whether you are really my son Hairy-man or not'. 22So Heel drew close to his father Trickster, who felt him and said, 'The voice is the

voice of Heel, but the hands are the hands of Hairy-man'. [23]And he did not acknowledge him because his hands were hairy like those of his brother Hairy-man, so he blessed him, [24]and he said, 'Are you really my son Hairy-man'. And he said, 'I am'. [25]So he said, 'Serve me and let me eat of my son's game that my soul may bless you'. So he served him and he ate, and he brought him wine and he drank. [26]Then his father Trickster said to him, 'Please come close and kiss me, my son'; [27]and he went up and kissed him. And he smelled his clothes and he blessed him saying, 'Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of the fields that YHWH has blessed.

[28]May the Divine give you
Of the dew of heaven and the fat of the earth,
Abundance of new grain and wine.
[29]Let peoples serve you,
And nations bow to you;
Be master over your brothers,
And let your mother's sons bow to you.
Cursed be they who curse you,
Blessed they who bless you.'

The Testing of Hairy-Man

[30]No sooner had Heel left the presence of his father Trickster—after Trickster had finished blessing Heel—then his brother Hairy-man came back from his hunt. [31]He too prepared a dish and brought it to his father. And he said to his father, 'Let my father sit up and eat of his son's game, so that your soul may bless me'. [32]His father Trickster said to him, 'Who are you?' And he said, 'I am Hairy-man, your first born!' [33]Trickster was seized with very violent trembling and he said, 'Who was it then that hunted game and brought it to me and I ate of it before you came and I blessed him, also blessed will he be?' [34]When Hairy-man heard his father's words, he burst into wild and bitter sobbing, and said to his father, 'Bless me too, Father!' [35]But he answered, 'Your brother came with guile and took away your blessing'. [36]He said, 'Was he, then, named Heel that he might supplant me these two times? First he took away my birthright and now he has taken away my blessing!' And he added, 'Have you not reserved a blessing for me?' [37]Trickster answered, saying to Hairy-man, 'But I have made him master over you: I have given him all his brothers for servants, and sustained him with grain and wine. What, then, can I still do for you, my son?' [38]And Hairy-man said to his father, 'Have you but one blessing, Father? Bless me too, Father!' And Hairy-man wept aloud. [39]So his father Trickster answered, saying:

'See, your abode shall enjoy the fat of the earth
And the dew of heaven above.
40Yet by your sword you shall live,
And you shall serve your brother;
But when you grow restive,
You shall break his yoke from your neck.'

Confirming the Successor

41Now Hairy-man harbored a grudge against Heel because of the blessing which his father had given him, and Hairy-man said to himself, 'Let but the mourning period of my father come, and I will kill my brother Heel'. 42When the words of her son Hairy-man, the elder, were reported to Binder, she sent for her son Heel, the younger, and said to him, 'Your brother Hairy-man is consoling himself by planning to kill you. 43Now, my son, listen to me. Flee at once to Haran, to my brother, Laban. 44Stay with him a while, until your brother's fury subsides—45until your brother's anger against you subsides—and he forgets what you have done to him. Then I will fetch you from there. Let me not lose you both in one day!' 46Then Binder said to Trickster, 'I am disgusted with my life because of the Hittite women. If Heel marries a Hittite woman like these, from among the native women, what good will life be to me?' 28.1So Trickster sent for Heel and blessed him. He admonished him and said, 'You shall not take a wife from among the Canaanite women. 2Up, go to Paddan-Aram, to the house of Bethuel, your mother's father, and take a wife there from among the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother. 3May El Shaddai/Divine Nurturer bless you, make you fertile and numerous, so that you become an assembly of peoples. 4S/He grant the blessing of Abraham to you and your offspring, that you may possess the land where you are sojourning, which the Divine assigned to Abraham.' 5Then Trickster sent Heel off, and he went to Paddan-Aram, to Laban the son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Binder, mother of Heel and Hairy-man. 6When Hairy-man saw that Trickster had blessed Heel and sent him off to Paddan-Aram to take a wife from there, charging him, as he blessed him, 'You shall not take a wife from among the Canaanite women', 7and that Heel had obeyed his father and mother and gone to Paddan-Aram, 8Hairy-man realized that the Canaanite women displeased his father Trickster. 9So Hairy-man went to Ishmael and took to wife, in addition to the wives he had, Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, sister of Nebaioth.

Commentary

Choosing a Successor

At forty years of age, Hairy-man takes two Hittite wives who irritate both parents. Trickster is bedridden and his eyesight dim but his appetite, including his senses of smell and taste, is hearty. With exaggeration typical of trickster figures, he anticipates the worst and calls in his eldest to prepare for blessing.

Binder is present when her husband sends Hairy-man off on a day's errand. Did Trickster mean for her to hear? Once before Trickster and Binder cooperated in outwitting a powerful man, Abimelech king of Gerar (Gen. 26). As Abraham and Sarah had done before them, the couple presented Binder as Trickster's sister in order to keep the husband alive among covetous strangers. Later, however, in full view of the monarch's window, Trickster was seen *m^{e}ṣaḥēq*, 'fondling', Binder. Uniting Isaac with other trickster figures, this is a sexual play on the name *yiṣḥāq* which may also mean 'he will laugh', 'jest', 'sport', or 'toy with' (BDB, 850). This deception/undeception in Gerar won the couple royal protection.

Now, given their different preferences in sons, Trickster may have an inkling that Binder will tell her favorite son Heel that Hairy-man is about to be blessed. Of course she does, commanding Heel to approach his father in the guise of Hairy-man.

Commentators fall on both sides in answer to the question: is Isaac deceived? Reading Isaac as Trickster, we know he is not deceived. The important question becomes: why does he proceed with the blessing? I suggest that once Binder put the deception into motion, Trickster's ill-defined wish comes into focus as he realizes that Binder sent Heel, pretending to be Hairy-man. The wily old man takes the opportunity to see for himself which son is most suited to carry the blessing of Abraham. Who is clever enough to survive among arrogant, powerful men? Whatever the consequences, Trickster will not be blamed.

Why does Binder conceive this risky circumvention of her first-born? A clue is in her repetition of Trickster's instructions to Hairy-man. For Heel to hear, she adds 'bless you before YHWH'.

She believes 'the older will serve the younger', which was the divine oracle given to her while the twins struggled in her womb (Gen. 25.23). Her certainty parallels Abraham's when he sends his servant to the homeland to find a wife for Trickster. She knows that Heel will win the blessing, just as Abraham knew that the Divine would guide his servant to the appropriate wife. As one chosen by the Divine (Gen. 24), Binder is confident that the right son will be blessed, but Heel must act now. She knows he wants the blessing. On his own initiative, Heel has already taken advantage of Hairy-man's hunger and bought the birthright, the first-born's double portion (Gen. 25.27-34).

Just as King David holds the divine gift of the crown of Judah–Israel, Trickster holds and administers Abraham's unique gift from YHWH: the promise of the land of Canaan. Hairy-man expects to succeed his father. Deprived of a voice in this momentous event for the family, Binder considers her husband's character and fears. Trickster is cautious with forceful men, as we witness from his maneuvering with Abimelech and his counselors. He survives through deception, then undeception; retreat, then standing his ground (Gen. 26). With sensitivity to relationships, Binder manages to avert conflict through imaginative circumvention.

Three words which have to do with deceiving or tricking are used in the episode: *yiṣḥāq*, he 'laughs' or 'mocks'; *mᵉta'tē'a*, 'trickster' (27.12); and *mirmâ*, 'guile' (27.35). This cluster of terms, and the use of the latter two regarding Heel, indicate the narrator's intent: Trickster passes the mantle to the next-generation trickster.[1]

Binder contrives a situation whereby Trickster may bless Heel, yet shift the blame away from himself. She knows her husband and sons. If Heel implements her plan, he will surely win his father's blessing. Heel's only objection is that he may be found out as a trickster, *mᵉta'tē'a*, and be cursed. When Binder

1. Naomi Steinberg remarks: 'so-called trickster tales analyzed by scholars typically contain no explicit reference to such a figure' (1988: 2). If we read the name Isaac as Trickster, combined with the other terms in his climactic scene, I suggest the narrator is explicit.

accepts responsibility for consequences, Heel eagerly carries out her instructions.

The Testing of Heel

Heel passes the preliminary test. Eight times Trickster questions his son's identity. (1) After hearing Heel address him, he asks, 'Who are you, my son?' (v. 19). (2) 'How did you succeed so quickly, my son?' (v. 20). (3) 'Please come closer that I may feel you, my son—whether you are really my son Hairy-man or not' (v. 21). (4) He observes, 'The voice is the voice of Heel, but the hands are the hands of Hairy-man' (v. 22). (5) We are told by the narrator, 'And he did not acknowledge him because his hands were hairy like those of his brother Hairy-man, so he blessed him' (v. 23); *hikkîrô* may be read as 'recognize', 'regard' or 'acknowledge', as when Ruth says to Boaz, 'why do you acknowledge me, seeing I am a stranger?' (Ruth 2.10). I suggest that, at this point, Trickster accepts Heel's disguise yet continues to prod, testing Heel's resolve and stamina. (6) 'Are you really my son Hairy-man?' (v. 24). (7) 'Serve me and let me eat of my son's game' (v. 25); and this man, who loves the taste of game, eats the dish of young goats prepared by Binder. Surely he knows the difference. (8) 'Please come close and kiss me, my son' (v. 27). Trickster smells him and may be pleased that even clothing has been considered by Binder for the deception of both Hairy-man and Heel.

Each time Trickster tests, either Heel's response or Binder's preparations permit Trickster to pretend to be deceived by Heel's hoax. Heel persists, and Trickster rewards his son with fertility of field, mastery over his kin, blessings not curses, thus fulfilling the oracle to Binder. However, calculating Trickster withholds the Divine promise unique to Abraham: possession of the land, and offspring to inherit it.

The Testing of Hairy-Man

Hairy-man fails his test. He enters with a hearty greeting. Trickster trembles violently with fear, now that he must cope directly with Hairy-man's grief. Pulling himself together, he says, 'Your brother came with guile (*mirmâ*) and took away your blessing' (27.35). Hairy-man sobs bitterly, 'have you not

reserved a blessing for me?' Crafty Trickster tells his son precisely what he gave Heel: mastery over brothers, sustenance with grain and wine, blessings not curses. Now the father inquires, 'What, then, can I still do for you, my son?'

Theoretically, Hairy-man could answer, 'Bless me with the land and descendants to inherit it!' And Trickster could respond to his favorite, 'Yes! Yes!' Instead, Hairy-man does not know. All he can do is sob: 'Have you but one blessing, father?' So Trickster blesses him with fertility of field, affirmation of the roughneck that he is, and concludes with an outlet to Hairy-man's frustration by offering the hope that he will free himself from servitude. Regarding the Divine promise to Abraham, Trickster has reserved the land for Heel.

Confirming the Successor

Binder hears about Hairy-man's muttering that he will kill Heel as soon as the old man is dead. First, she treats her common concerns with Heel, telling him to save his life and get a wife in Haran. Secondly, she raises with Trickster their shared complaint, the troublesome wives of Hairy-man. Without a word of reprimand to Heel for his farcical disguise, Trickster now affirms Heel as his successor by giving him the blessing of Abraham.

Imagining the Storyteller

Themes and style indicative of women storytellers emerge from this rereading within the larger Binder-Trickster cycle, Gen. 24.1–28.9. The woman's character is valued, and a man in authority is vulnerable and devious. Man and woman cooperate in order to survive. When combined with considerations of style, which is characteristic of Hebrew women storytellers, these themes may point to a woman writer.

Repetition is a particular mark of 'female narrative structure', according to folklorist and genizah scholar S.D. Goitein:

> When we read for example the story of Eliezer and Rebekah at the well (Gen. 24), it is difficult to shake the impression that we have before us a typical woman's story...because the technique of double and triple repetition which is so prominent in the

> story is...characteristic of female narrative structure—as I have found it for example in Yemenite collections (1988: 31).[1]

Goitein further observes that he 'sometimes heard women's poetry spoken by men and men's by women; and yet the gender of the author was always immediately apparent' (p. 2); and he recommends this as instructive for students of literature.

For examples of this repetitious style of communication by women within the Bible, I point the reader to the young women who respond to Saul and his servant (1 Sam. 9.11-14). Abigail addressing David (1 Sam. 25.24-30), and the wise woman of Tekoa appealing to David as king (2 Sam. 14.4-20) share this mode of expression. Though the effort of Tamar, daughter of David, to dissuade her brother Amnon from raping her is relatively brief (2 Sam. 13.12-17), her appeal includes repetition. It is of interest that H. Gunkel, in remarking on repetitious speeches in Genesis 37–50, characterizes them as being 'effeminate' and 'sentimental' (1910: 389). What was derogatory toward feminine modes of expression in 1910 as in 1991 appreciated as, simply, a different mode of communication.[2] The 'effeminate' speeches of Judah (Gen. 44.18-34) may indicate that we are hearing a man in a suppliant position speaking through the medium of a woman storyteller.

Goitein does 'not discuss women as *authors* but as creators of biblical literary *genre*' (1988: 5). In a note (p. 32 n. 19), he discounts as female folk story many other passages with recapitulations 'for *specific purposes*'. Presumably, male storytellers would have a purpose for repetition while female would not, a premise I reject. I do, however, agree with his observation:

1. I am grateful to Michael Carasik for sending me his English translation. The original was published in Hebrew in 1957. Goitein's insight that parts of Hebrew Scripture might be women's tales, songs, conversation and proverbs included by male scribes preceded both R.E. Friedman and H. Bloom by three decades.

2. I recommend anthropologist-linguist Deborah Tannen's two studies of conversational styles: *That's not what I Meant!* and *You just don't Understand.*

> Nor is the interesting conjecture of H.M. and N.K. Chadwick in *The Growth of Literature* (Cambridge, 1936), that the stories about David were written by or for women, on account of the great amount of women's doings in them (Michal, Abigail, Rizpah daughter of Aiah, Bathsheba, Tamar, Avishag), acceptable as a basis for investigation, for it is too general (p. 31 n. 2).

Drawing upon Goitein's insights of three and a half decades ago, I propose we enlarge our vision of the possibility of women authors on the basis of combining content with style and purpose. A woman writer, rather than a man, would be more likely to highlight the theme that the mother, as well as the father, exercises influence toward determining which son will inherit the blessing.

Eight times in the course of the narrative in Genesis 24, the fact that Binder is divinely appointed to be Trickster's wife is stated or implied. The repetition there serves to emphasize, to an audience unaccustomed to the concept, that women as well as men are chosen to perpetuate the promise—a fundamental, repeated point regarding the matriarchs. Sarah, not Hagar nor Keturah, is designated by the Deity as mother of the child meant to carry the promise. Rebekah is both chosen and receives the oracle supporting Jacob. Unloved by Jacob, Leah feels appreciated by YHWH, whom she praises in naming her fourth son Judah; and Tamar waylays Judah, becoming an ancestress to David. Substance as well as form and intent suggest that we are hearing a woman's narrative.

Furthermore, studies on humor and the use of satire show that members of an underclass, such as women in a patriarchal culture, are accustomed to using irony and disguised means of communicating with those in power.[1] Within the Bible, the crafty

1. See Fontaine 1988:

> Stereotyping women as deceivers... reveals a 'truth' about the condition of women (or any powerless, marginated group) under patriarchy: where women are debarred by status from direct action to achieve their goals without fear of reprisal, they will resort to indirect strategies such as deception, gossip, and counselling, which *are* available to those of inferior status (p. 85).

She further notes that 'the strategy for effective action most closely associated with women characters in the Hebrew Bible is a morally ambivalent one'.

woman from Tekoa was called by Joab, commander of the royal army, for circumspect communication with King David. Though Joab instructed her regarding basic content, she was engaged for her artistry. After she convinces David with her tragic tales of one son killing another, one may read with irony her flattery of the monarch, whom she has hoodwinked into recalling his son Absalom from exile. She says, perhaps archly, 'my lord the king is like an angel of God, understanding everything, good and bad' (2 Sam. 14.17). This prompts David to realize that Joab is behind the ruse. Similarly, I suggest that a woman storyteller may have used irony or humor to address current issues at court and subtly to rebuke the monarch. The 'rebuker' or 'wise instructor' is a genre recognized by Goitein among ancient Hebrew and Arab women (1988: 11-12).

Goitein also notes that, 'the Yemenite woman, despite her lowly and limited social position, expressed in her poetry public opinion on the events of the day'. Furthermore, 'in most of these poems there is a generous helping of mockery, or at least a humorous strain' (p. 2). Such observations of women's mockery of contemporary events is suggestive for imagining the narrator in Genesis 24–28.

With appreciation of ironic intent we may see that the narrator, on the one hand, treats lightly, though empathically, a man like Hairy-man whose assumption of power is based on first-born status and physical prowess. On the other hand, she highlights the shrewdness of characters who are vulnerable: a woman, an elderly father, a younger son.

Resemblances between the Binder-Trickster cycle and the so-called Court History or Succession Narrative (2 Sam. 7; 11–20; 1 Kgs 1–2), concluding in the first two chapters of 1 Kings, become visible when we note the narrator's use of repetition and the interactions of the prophet Nathan, Bathsheba and David. Both Isaac and King David are the humans in authority at the time, yet each is portrayed as both vulnerable and deceptive.

As narratives in Genesis and Samuel are morally 'ambivalent', I suggest this may indicate a woman narrator. See also Barreca 1991 and Steinberg 1988: 3-4.

When David is old and restricted to bed (as Trickster is), Adonijah (something like Hairy-man) proclaims himself king. Four times we hear details of Adonijah's seizure of kingship: first from the narrator, secondly from Nathan to Bathsheba, thirdly from Bathsheba to David, fourthly from Nathan to David. This results in David's acknowledging a vow to Bathsheba that Solomon would succeed him. Nowhere in the Court History do we actually hear David make such a vow, so we may wonder if in fact he did swear or if, at this moment, he realizes (as Trickster did) that he must act: either allow Adonijah to usurp the throne, or choose Solomon to succeed him according to the wishes of Nathan and Bathsheba. Bathsheba, like Binder, has support from a divine oracle naming Solomon Jedidiah, 'beloved of Yah' (2 Sam. 12.24-25).

Once David decides in favor of Solomon, three times we hear what is done. First, David gives instructions; secondly, the narrator describes how they were carried out; thirdly, Jonathan son of Abiathar reports to Adonijah. For contrast, one may look at a male version in Scripture, the priestly rendition of succession in 1 Chron. 20.1. Omitted are the waning of David, the lethal rivalry between sons, and the mention of wives or daughter. Repetitious narratives concerned with people's interactions, familial intrigues and tragedies do not interest the priests (1 Chron. 22.8-10).

Along with multiple repetitions pointed out by Goitein as a technique of women storytellers, I suggest that complex characterizations, human vulnerability, ambiguities in motivation (more common to women than to men; according to Carol Gilligan in her study of moral development, *In a Different Voice* [1982]), and ironic turns of events distinguish a woman narrator in both Genesis and the Court History.

Through the veil of humor in the Binder-Trickster cycle one may read a trenchant but circumspect message addressing the pressing issue of succession for aging but wily King David. With tales of the king's ancestors in covenant with YHWH, she prepares David to choose the smartest son and to let go of command.

I also imagine she is the Court Historian. After David dies, her writings might be anonymously incorporated into the book

of Nathan, mentioned by the priests in 1 Chron. 29.29 and 2 Chron. 9.29; 29.25. She records recent events of the family of David without comedy but in her matchless style, recognizable by a combination of repetition, irony and ambiguity regarding those who hold and influence power among mortals.

COMMENTS ON GENESIS: GENESIS 29*

Elizabeth Cady Stanton

Jacob's journey to the land of Canaan in search of a wife, and the details of his courtship, have a passing interest with the ordinary reader, interested in his happiness and success. The classic ground for the cultivation of the tender emotions in these early days, seems to have been near a well, where the daughters of those who were rich in flocks and herds found opportunities to exhibit their fine points in drawing water for men and cattle. From the records of these interesting events, the girls seemed ready to accept the slightest advances from passing strangers, and to give their hands and hearts as readily as they gave a drink of water to the thirsty. Marriage was as simple a contract as the purchase of a lamb, the lamb and the woman having about an equal voice in the purchase, though the lamb was not quite as ready to leave his accustomed grazing ground. Jacob loved Rachel at first sight, and agreed to serve Laban seven years, but when the time expired Laban did not keep his agreement, but insisted on Jacob taking the other sister, and serving seven years more for Rachel. Jacob submitted, but by the knowledge of a physiological law of which Laban was ignorant, he revenged himself, and obtained all the strongest and best of the flocks and herds. Thus in their business relations as well as in family matters, the Patriarchs seem to have played as sharp games in overreaching each other as the sons of our Pilgrim Fathers do to-day. In getting all they could out of Laban, Jacob and Rachel seem to have been of one mind.

* Reprinted from E.C. Stanton (ed.), *The Woman's Bible* (New York: European Publishing Co., 1895): ch. 9.

A critical study of the Pentateuch is just now agitating the learned classes in Germany. Bonn is an ancient stronghold of theological learning, and two of the professors of its famous university have recently exhibited a courage in biblical criticism and interpretation which has further extended the celebrity of the school, if it has not added to its repute for orthodoxy. In a course of lectures held during the university holidays, addressed to and largely attended by pastors, they declared the Old Testament history to 'be a series of legends, and Abraham, Isaac and Jacob mythical persons'. Israel, they declared, was an idolatrous people, Jehovah being nothing more than a 'God of the Jewish Nation'. This radical outbreak of criticism and interpretation has aroused considerable attention throughout Germany, and a declaration against it and other teachings of the kind has been signed by some hundreds of pastors and some thousands of laymen, but so far it has produced no effect whatever on the professors of Bonn, and there is no prospect of its doing so. It is fortunate for the faith thus assailed that the critical and rhetorical style of the ordinary German professor is too heavy for export or general circulation, so that the theories of Messrs. Graef and Meinhold are not likely to do the faith of the Fatherland any particular harm. That country has always been divided into two classes, one of which believes nothing and the other everything, the latter numerically preponderant, but the former exceeding in erudition and dialectic—a condition of things quite certain to continue and on which a few essays more or less in destructive criticism can produce little effect.

MRS STANTON'S STATEMENTS...*

Clara Bewick Colby

Mrs Stanton's statements concerning the undeveloped religious sentiment of the early Hebrews cannot be criticized from the orthodox standpoint as in this account, where the God of Abraham is represented as taking an active personal interest in the affairs of the chosen people, they did not trust wholly to him, but kept images of the gods of the neighboring tribes in their houses, Laban feeling sorry enough over their loss to go seven days' journey to recover them while his daughter felt she could not leave her father's house without taking the images with her as a protection.

The faults of Laban, of Jacob and of most of his sons are brought out without any reserve by the historian who follows the custom of early writers in stating things exactly as they were. There was no secrecy and little delicacy in connection with sexual matters. It may, however, be noticed that while this people had the same crude notions about these things that were common to other nations, yet every infraction of the divine law of monogamy, symbolized in the account of the creation of woman in the second chapter of Genesis, brings its own punishment whether in or out of the marriage relation. When one or another people sinned against a Jewish woman the men of the family were the avengers, as when the sons of Jacob slew a whole city to avenge an outrage committed against their sister. Polygamy and concubinage wove a thread of disaster and complications throughout the whole lives of families and its dire effects are directly traceable in the feuds and degeneration of

* Reprinted from E.C. Stanton (ed.), *The Woman's Bible* (New York: European Publishing Co., 1895): 57-58.

their descendants. The chief lesson taught by history is danger of violating, physically, mentally or spiritually, the personal integrity of woman. Customs of the country and the cupidity of Laban forced polygamy on Jacob, and all the shadows in his life—and he had no end of trouble in after years—are due to this. Perhaps nothing but telling their stories in this brutally frank way would make the lesson so plain.

If we search this narrative ever so closely it gives us no hint of divinely intended subordination of woman. Jacob had to buy his wives with service which indicates that a high value was placed upon them. Nowadays in high life men demand instead of give. The degradation of woman involved in being sold to a husband, to put it in the most humiliating way, is not comparable to the degradation of having to buy a husband. Euripides made Medea say, 'We women are the most unfortunate of all creatures since we have to buy our masters at so dear a price', and the degradation of Grecian women is repeated—all flower-garlanded and disguised by show—in the marriage sentiments of our own civilization. Jacob was dominated by his wives as Abraham and Isaac had been and there is no hint of their subjection. Rachel's refusal to move when the gods were being searched for, showed that her will was supreme, nobody tried to force her to rise against her own desire.

The love which Jacob bore for Rachel has been through all time the symbol of constancy. Seven years he served for her, and so great was his love, so pure his delight in her presence that the time seemed but as a day. Had this simple, absorbing affection not been interfered with by Laban, how different would have been the tranquil life of Jacob and Rachel, developing undisturbed by the inevitable jealousies and vexations connected with the double marriage. Still this love was the solace of Jacob's troubled life and remained unabated until Rachel died and then found expression in tenderness for Benjamin, 'the son of my right hand'. It was no accident, but has a great significance, that this most ardent and faithful of Jewish lovers should have deeper spiritual experiences than any of his predecessors.

TAMAR IN PSEUDO-PHILO'S *BIBLICAL HISTORY*

Pieter W. van der Horst

Even though a considerable number of ancient Jewish authors and writings have been investigated from the point of view of their attitude towards women or their images of women,[1] Pseudo-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* (*LAB*) has not received the attention it deserves in this respect. It has to be said to the credit of Charles Perrot that he devoted a short paragraph to 'le féminisme du Pseudo-Philon' as far back as 1976 in the *Sources chrétiennes* commentary on *LAB* (Harrington *et al.* 1976: II, 52-53), but his brief remarks have not provoked the more detailed study that is necessary in order to do justice to the way this writing portrays several biblical women in its rewriting of the Bible story. This paper is an attempt to make a first step in that direction. It will deal only with the way this first-century author rewrites the story of Tamar in Genesis 38.

As to the matriarchs, *LAB* does hardly more than merely noting their existence, Rebekah not even being mentioned by name.[2] The first woman that is really focused upon is Tamar, Judah's daughter-in-law. In a typically Pseudo-Philonic way, she is not mentioned where we would expect it, *sc.* in 8.9, but only in *LAB*'s treatment of the story of Moses' birth in Exodus 1–2, *sc.* in 9.5.[3] There Amram raises a heavy protest against the

1. E.g., W.C. Trenchard (1982), B. Halpern Amaru (1988), J.R. Wegner (1982, 1988), P.W. van der Horst (1989), L.J. Archer (1990).

2. Contrast Josephus's treatment of the matriarchs on which see Bailey 1987: 154-79; also B. Halpern Amaru's study mentioned in n. 1 above.

3. On this method of 'nachholende Erzählung', which is such a frequent phenomenon in *LAB*, see Eissfeldt 1966: 340-53.

decision of the elders of the people that they should no longer have intercourse with their wives in view of Pharaoh's measures. One of Amram's arguments for going on to create progeny is as follows:

> When our wives conceive, they will not be recognized as pregnant until three months have passed, as also our mother Tamar did. For her intent was not fornication, but being unwilling to separate from the sons of Israel she reflected and said, 'It is better for me to die for having intercourse with my father-in-law than to have intercourse with gentiles'. And she hid the fruit of her womb until the third month. For then she was recognized. And on her way to be put to death, she made a declaration saying, 'He who owns this staff and this signet ring and the sheepskin, from him I have conceived' [Gen. 38.25]. And her intent saved her from all danger.[1]

Several elements in this fragment call for comment. The first is the conspicuous appellation 'our mother Tamar'. As far as I know, there is no parallel in the Bible nor in the early Jewish literature to such an honourable title for either Tamar or any other woman from the Hebrew Bible. The only near-parallel is found in *LAB* 33.7, where after Deborah's death the people say in their lamentation, 'Behold there has perished a mother from Israel' (with the words from Judg. 5.7).[2] There can be little doubt that the expression 'our mother Tamar' is derived from the well-known expression 'our father Abraham'.[3] So what the author seems to imply here is that Tamar is not only not to be blamed for her behaviour but on the contrary is to be seen as being on a par with the patriarchs, 'our fathers'. In his positive reappraisal of Tamar, the author is not alone.[4] Several other ancient Jewish sources praise Tamar for her virtuous and pious action (Philo, the targumim, the midrashim).[5] But there is a clear

1. I use throughout the translation by Daniel Harrington in Charlesworth 1985: II, 295-377.

2. On Deborah's status in *LAB* see van der Horst 1990: 111-22.

3. See Josh. 24.3; *m. Ab.* 5.2; *Gen. R.* 35.1, 6; 40.5; 41.8; Mt. 3.9; Lk. 3.8; 16.24, 30; Jn 8.53; Rom. 4.12, 16.

4. See Petit 1987. For rabbinic evidence see Str–B, I, 15-18, with the critical comments by R. Bloch (1957: 381-89).

5. Josephus omits the story completely; see Petit 1987: 89.

difference in emphasis. In the other writings the emphasis is on the justification of Judah's behaviour[1] (a common trait in much aggada on the patriarchs in general), whereas in *LAB* Judah is not even mentioned, the emphasis being completely on the justification, or rather the extolling, of Tamar's behaviour. It is not Judah that is 'our father', but Tamar is 'our mother', and this can only be meant as the highest praise of this woman and it elevates her to matriarchal status.[2] (It may be added that in the question of whether Tamar was an Israelite or a Canaanite woman, a much debated issue in ancient Jewish sources, our author clearly sides with those who regard her as a member of the people of Israel.)

The second element to be noted is that of Tamar's hiding of her pregnancy for three months. Genesis 38 only states that after three months Tamar was reported to Judah to be pregnant. The element of hiding for three months comes from Exodus 2, but there Jochebed hides the baby (Moses) for three months *after* his birth. Here these two motives have been fused together so as to make Tamar hide her pregnancy for three months, which is exactly what Jochebed is now also said to have done (*LAB* 9.12). There Jochebed 'hid the child *in her womb* for three months', a statement which 'appears to result from the parallel with Tamar in *LAB* 9.5'.[3] Bauckham has demonstrated that this interpretation of Exod. 2.2 arose from a desire to explain an exegetical difficulty in the text of Exodus: 'In view of Pharaoh's strict instructions in Exod. 1.22 (cf. *LAB* 9.12), how could Jochebed have concealed the child after its birth?' (Bauckham 1983: 55). The parallel with Tamar in Genesis 38 'is invoked as scriptural authority for believing that the first three

1. See Petit 1987: 92. The most glaring case of whitewashing is probably *Gen. R.* 85.8, where it is said that Judah did not feel like having intercourse with the harlot, but since the angel who is in charge of desire pressed him, he did so against his wish!

2. Bloch (see n. 5, p. 264) demonstrates (in connection with Mt. 1.3) that in some Jewish writings the messianic aspects of Tamar's act receive emphasis.

3. Thus Bauckham 1983: 55.

months of pregnancy can be concealed, but no more' (p. 55).[1] In other writings dealing with the three months of Exod. 2.2, the problem has been solved in a different way, namely by making Moses into a seven months' child, or rather a six months' child.[2] Our author does not do so, which is somewhat surprising in view of the fact that the aggadic tendency to create seven months' children from great biblical figures is not unfamiliar to him: in *LAB* 23.8 it is explicitly stated that Isaac was such an extraordinary child born in the seventh month. (The reasons behind this aggadic development, though fascinating enough, cannot be dealt with here; I have extensively discussed the relevant material in an article of 1978.)[3] However that may be, the parallel drawn here between Tamar and Moses' mother, her presentation as a model and her being called 'our mother', certainly suggest a raising of her status in the story.

The third element that calls for brief comment is the fact that Tamar is the first person in *LAB* to raise her voice against intermarriage with heathens, an important motif in *LAB* (see, e.g., 18.13; 21.1; 30.1; 44.7; 45.3) which does not play a role in Genesis 38. It is not without importance to take note of this, since it provides further evidence that our author has his most important or central religious ideas formulated by women (see, e.g., chs. 30–33 on Deborah and Jael). So we may conclude that in this very brief paragraph of Amram's speech we have seen

1. In n. 79 Bauckham discusses the possibility (suggested by Feldman [1971: xciii]) that words have fallen out in 9.12 by homoioteleuton so that the text originally may have read: 'she hid the child in her womb for three months. When she gave birth, she saw that he was a goodly child, and hid him for three months. For she could not hide him any longer...' As Bauckham remarks,

> This suggestion has the advantage of explaining *why* she concealed the first three months of pregnancy: not that the Egyptians should miscalculate her pregnancy and expect the birth three months too late (cf. *Exod. Rab.* 1.20). This miscalculation would give her three months, but only three months, after Moses' birth in which she could keep the birth secret. *Exod. Rab.* 1.20 (...) shows that the practical improbabilities of this suggestion would not have deterred Pseudo-Philo from suggesting it.

2. See van der Horst 1978: 346-60.
3. See previous note.

Tamar being raised to the level of the patriarchs. It is clear that the author attributes a prominence to this biblical woman that goes far beyond what she is accorded in either the Bible or elsewhere in the post-biblical tradition.

Part III

Emblems of Sexual Illicitness

DINAH THE DAUGHTER

Naomi Graetz

It is safe to generalize that in all patriarchal societies, daughters are less valuable than sons. In such societies, daughters have value primarily on the marriage market and in their potential to bear children (Williamson 1976).

The daughter's monetary value is a function of her sexual purity. If she violates the sexual code by losing her virginity prior to marriage, this transgression constitutes a loss of face to the family. Therefore the father's primary responsibility is to protect his daughter in his home. It would seem that the daughter is a burden to her father in all matters relating to her sexuality because of the potential threat it poses to the family's honor.

It should be understandable why fathers and brothers breathe a sigh of relief when their daughters and sisters are safely married and off their hands. The only acceptable role for a girl is wife and mother, whereas 'daughter' is a temporary and dangerous status.

This describes well the attitude in the biblical period. There are many daughters mentioned in the book of Genesis, but the only one to retain the permanent status of daughter, who never marries or has children, is Dinah. When an individual woman such as Dinah acts contrary to the role expected of her by society, there are surface irregularities or loose ends in the text. This anomaly can be corrected through the process of interpretation, or midrash.

I plan to show how interpretation is an on-going process, utilizing five biblical sources relating directly and indirectly to the case of Dinah from the specific vantage point of Dinah as a victim. Then I will go on to look at two different post-biblical

attitudes toward daughters in general, before moving on to show rabbinical attitudes toward Dinah. Finally I will conclude by mentioning several modern interpretations which focus on Dinah as a subject, not as an object.

In the book of Genesis there are two sources in which the treatment of Dinah is ambivalent. It begins in the very description surrounding the circumstances of her birth. The phrase *wattahar wattēlēd* ('she conceived and bore') and an explanation of their names accompanies the description of the birth of each of Dinah's brothers—Jacob's twelve sons. But when Dinah's origin is accounted for, the text reads merely as follows: 'Lastly, [Leah] bore him a daughter, and named her Dinah' (Gen. 30.21). Was she conceived? What is the source of her name? The Bible chooses not to say.

This ambivalence continues in the tale of Dinah herself, who was raped[1] by Shechem. Shechem, son of Hamor, fell in love with Dinah after he had raped her and wanted to have her hand in marriage. Her father Jacob and her brothers agreed, on condition that Shechem and all the townspeople of Shechem be circumcised. However, on the third day when the Shechemites were hurting from the circumcision, Simeon and Levi killed the defenseless men and laid waste to the town. In response to their act of violence Jacob said, 'You have brought trouble on me, making me odious among the inhabitants of the land' (Gen. 34.30), thus implying that they had 'muddied' his heretofore clean reputation.[2] The brothers' answer to Jacob is in the form of

1. Deem shows that *'innâ* in certain contexts means rape (cf. Judg. 19.24; 20.5; 2 Sam. 13.12, 14, 22, 32; Ezek. 22.11; Lam. 5.11). See, however, Moshe Weinfeld (1972)who disagrees, writing that *'innâ* in *piel* form in the passages cited above may 'connote sexual intercourse in general rather than rape' (p. 286). However, in a footnote, he concedes that *'innâ* might refer to sexual intercourse which involves 'an element of imposition upon the woman. It might then still refer to seduction' (p. 286 n. 5).

2. 'And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi: ye have troubled me (34.30). The Rabbis commented: The vat was clear, and ye have muddied it... R. Judah B. Simon said: [They answered]: The vat was muddied, and we have purified it. And they said: should one deal with our sister as with a harlot? (34.31) Will they treat us as common property, they exclaimed, What caused all this? The fact "*Dinah went out*" (34.1)'. (*Gen. R.* 80.12).

a rhetorical question: 'Should our sister be treated like a whore?' (Gen. 34.31). The message is that our sister is not to be 'made' (*ya'ᵃśēh*) into an object of scorn. The text, which does not explicitly criticize the brothers for their violent act of revenge or Jacob for being a silent father, is left wide open to interpretation.

The two direct sources on Dinah (Gen. 30 and 34) are highlighted by three additional intertexts. Jacob has the last word in our third source—his deathbed scene—when he says,

> Simeon and Levi are a pair; their weapons are tools of lawlessness... When angry they slay men, and when pleased they maim oxen. Cursed be their anger so fierce... I will divide them in Jacob, scatter them in Israel (Gen. 49.5-7).

This passage is usually understood by most exegetes to be a commentary on the episode in Genesis 34.

The Bible's attitude to such a story is more explicit in our fourth source: the book of Deuteronomy. In contrast to the law pertaining to the seduction of an unbetrothed virgin in Exod. 22.15-16 whose object is 'to protect the financial interests of the father', the author of Deuteronomy is 'concerned with rectifying the moral and personal wrong committed against the maiden' (Weinfeld 1972: 284-85).

> 28 If a man comes upon a virgin who is not engaged and he seizes her and lies with her, and they are discovered, 29 the man who lay with her shall pay the girl's father fifty [shekels of] silver, and she shall be his wife. Because he has violated her, he can never have the right to divorce her (Deut. 22.28-29).

The seducer pays the father the money as a *fine* for violating the virgin, not as *compensation* to the father.

Shechem was willing to obey the law of the land as decreed by Mesopotamian legal sources.[1] He behaved according to the norms in his willingness to marry Dinah. The brothers, according to Deuteronomy, interfered with his obligation to marry her and were wrong to cut off her only chance of marriage. The law

1. J.J. Finkelstein writes, 'Midrashic authors were fully sensitive to the overtones of the verb *yaṣa'* in the Dinah story, as their amplifications of it clearly show' (1966: 363).

of Deuteronomy can thus be considered an internal commentary on the story of Dinah (Carmichael 1979).

The fifth intertext addresses itself in circuitous fashion to Dinah's plight. The commentary—the story of Amnon and Tamar in 2 Samuel 13—is expressed by the recognition of linguistic analogies. The story is similar to Dinah's except that the rapist is Tamar's half-brother, David's son Amnon. Amnon pretends to be sick and refuses to eat unless Tamar feeds him. When he gets her alone he tells her to lie with him. She refuses, saying, 'Don't *brother*. Don't force me. Such things are not done in Israel! Don't do such a vile thing! Where will I hide my shame?' (2 Sam. 13.12-14).

In clear contrast to Shechem, who fell in love with Dinah after he had raped her and wanted her for his wife, Amnon cannot stand the sight of Tamar after the rape and tells her to get out. Unlike Dinah, who has no personality of her own whatsoever in the biblical text, and is not heard from at the time of the rape (or after, for that matter), Tamar pleads, 'Please don't commit this wrong; to send me away would be even worse than the first wrong you committed against me' (2 Sam. 13.16). But he kicks her out and she goes away screaming hysterically, dramatically tearing her tunic and putting dust on her head as a sign of mourning. Her brother Absalom keeps his hate to himself until it later explodes in an act of murder, in contrast to the immediate devastation which Simeon and Levi visit on the town of Shechem.

The parallels are clear: Tamar's anguished reaction (using the almost identical wording of the brothers in Genesis) makes it clear that the narrator wants us to think she was aware of Dinah's fate, one which she did not want to be her own. The story takes into account the pain a woman feels at being raped and the indignity of being thrown out. Yet, despite the echo of her screams Tamar, daughter of David, is not heard from again in the Bible—just like her counterpart Dinah, daughter of Jacob. Finally, the two stories feature two daughters, and their two fathers who failed in their primary responsibility to protect their daughters from harm.

Before we look at what the rabbis of the third century had to say about Dinah the daughter and Jacob her father, it is worth

looking at Ben Sira's view of daughters and fathers.

Ben Sira's work Ecclesiasticus was written in 180 BCE. It is part of the apocryphal literature which did not enter the canonized Jewish and Protestant versions of the Old Testament. However, despite the rabbinic ban on his work,[1] the rabbinic commentators knew it well and quoted him extensively. Ben Sira singles out all that is negative about women and regurgitates it in concentrated form. The worst examples of his personal negative bias against women have to do with daughters.

> 9 A daughter is a secret cause of sleeplessness to her father, and his concern for her robs him of his rest; in her youth, for fear she will pass her prime, and when she is married, for fear she will be hated. 10 When she is a girl, for fear she will be profaned, and be with child in her father's house; when she has a husband, for fear she will transgress; and when she is married, for fear she will be childless. 11 Keep a close watch over a headstrong daughter, for fear she will fill your enemies with malignant joy, and make you the talk of the town and notorious among the people, and disgrace you before the multitude. In the spot where she lodges let there be nor window, or place overlooking the entrance round about. 12 Let her not expose her beauty to any male, and let her not take counsel among women. 13 For from the garment comes the moth, and from a woman comes a woman's wickedness. 14 Better is the wickedness of a man than the goodness of a woman, and a daughter causes fear regarding disgrace more than a son (Ecclus 42.9-14).[2]

In a similar vein Ben Sira writes elsewhere, 'Do you have daughters? Protect their body, but do not let your face shine

1. R. Akiva in particular. Cf. the debate in *b. Sanh.* 100b. Adin Steinsaltz, in his commentary on the tractate *Hagiga* (13a; 1967: 58), writes that, despite the fact that the rabbis considered Ben Sira's book apocryphal, they quoted it at length and viewed it with distinction. Some even considered it part of The Writings. According to Steinsaltz it was excluded from the canon because it was often confused with the *Alphabet of Ben Sira*, a popular book of the time.

2. The first half of the text is from Goodspeed (1959) and the second half is W. Trenchard's compilation (1982), based on his understanding of the available sources.

upon them' (7.24). This advice serves as a reminder of 'the ancient reality that a daughter's marketability as a wife and her virginity were unquestionably related' (Trenchard 1982: 131-32). Daughters are nothing but trouble. Ben Sira is equally explicit in another passage, when he complains that 'A daughter is born to [the father's] loss... She who disgraces is a grief to him who begat her' (22.3-4). The worst thing she can do is cause her father public disgrace by surrendering her virginity or becoming pregnant while unmarried, for then he will lose face before his enemies. His reputation, like Jacob's, will become tarnished.

Had Ben Sira presumed to give advice to Dinah's father, he no doubt would have told him to guard her to the extent that she should not have a room with windows—to prevent others from looking in. A daughter who deliberately exposes her beauty is guilty of seductive behavior. On the other hand, if she accidentally exposes herself, she might be raped. Therefore a father must do all he can to avoid being disgraced.

We can see in the example quoted below that Ben Sira and the writer of this midrash are on the same wavelength.

> When R. Simeon went to his father he asked him, 'Did the Babylonian congratulate you?' 'Yes', he answered, 'and he said thus to me'. 'Nevertheless,' Rabbi observed, 'both wine and vinegar are needed, yet wine is more needed than vinegar; both wheat and barley are needed, yet wheat is more needed than barley. When a man gives his daughter in marriage and incurs expense he says to her, "May you never return hither"' (*Gen. R.* 26.4).[1]

The message is clear: daughters are less valuable than sons. Fathers breathe sighs of collective relief only after their daughters are safely married, out of their homes and preoccupied with children.

We have seen the attitude of Ben Sira and rabbis towards daughters in general. What about the attitude of other midrashim to Jacob's daughter? Are they similar? Most of our midrashim use the following phrases as their prooftext:

> Dinah, the daughter whom Leah had born to Jacob, [*went out* to visit] the daughters of the land. Shechem son of Hamor the

1. All quotations are from Freedman and Simon (1983).

> Hivite, chief of the country, saw her, and took her and lay with her by force (Gen. 34.1-2; JPSV).

Since girls of marriageable age did not normally 'go out' to visit friends in the city, it is possible that the text itself criticizes Dinah's behavior by using the verbal stem *yṣ'*, 'to go out', which implies promiscuity. One can read into Dinah's unconventional behavior a desire for freedom or self-fulfillment that is alien to the times and threatening to the patriarchal structure of biblical society.

Despite the possible undertone of disapproval in the text towards Dinah's behavior, there are a sizeable number of rabbinic commentators who are uncertain whether Dinah was responsible for the act. There are those rabbis (influenced by Ben Sira perhaps) who assumed the worst—namely that she was guilty of deliberate exposure and, therefore, of her own seduction. Then there are those who assumed she accidentally exposed herself and was raped. Both groups of rabbis follow the legal argument in Deuteronomy, in which there is a clear distinction between a woman who protests her rape and one who does not.

> 23 In the case of a virgin who is engaged to a man—if a man comes upon her *in town* and lies with her, 24 you shall take the two of them out to the gate of that town and stone them to death: the girl because she did not cry for help in the town, and the man because he violated his neighbor's wife. Thus you will sweep away evil from your midst. 25 But if the man comes upon the engaged girl in the *open country* and the man lies with her by force, only the man who lay with her shall die, 26 but you shall do nothing to the girl. The girl did not incur the death penalty, for this case is like that of a man attacking another and murdering him. 27 He came upon her in the open; though the engaged girl cried for help, there was no one to save her (Deut. 22.23-27).

A woman who is raped in town, where one can prove whether she cried out, has to be judged according to the criteria of her having cried out or not. A woman who does not cry out for help is assumed not to have been raped. However, a woman who is raped in the country cannot prove whether she cried out, thus is presumed innocent. Those rabbis who see Dinah as going out to

see the big city of Shechem made negative comments about her which state that 'she went out...' (Gen. 34.1) and got what she deserved. You can see instances of this trend below:

> And whoso breaketh through a fence, a serpent shall bite him: i.e. Dinah. While her father and brothers were sitting in the House of Study, *she went out to see the daughters of the land* (Gen. 34.1). She brought upon herself her violation by Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, who is called a serpent, and he bit her... (*Eccl. R.* 10.8).

> And Dinah the daughter of Leah went out (34.1). Behold, everyone that useth proverbs shall use this proverb against thee, saying: 'As the mother, so her daughter' (Ezek. 16.44)... Resh Lakish asks Kahana: 'What is really the meaning of this verse?' 'A cow does not gore unless her calf kicks; a woman is not immoral until her daughter is immoral', he replied. 'If so', said he, 'then our mother Leah was a harlot!' 'Even so', he replied: 'because it says, "And Leah went out to meet him" (Gen. 30.16), which means that she went out to meet him adorned like a harlot'; therefore 'And Dinah the daughter of Leah went out' (*Gen. R.* 80.1).

Most rabbis do not follow Ben Sira's view that daughters deliberately expose themselves and are therefore asking for it. There is a second group of rabbis who are not convinced it was her fault, because they see her as one who was raped in the countryside. They see her as one who accidentally exposed herself to Shechem, and thus they have second thoughts about Dinah's fate. These rabbis have her resurfacing as the mother of Asenath, who is adopted by Potiphar and then marries Joseph.

> Dinah bore her brother a son and from her union with Shechem sprang a daughter, Asenath by name, afterward the wife of Joseph. When this daughter was born to Dinah, her brothers wanted to kill her, that the finger of men might not point at the fruit of sin. But Jacob took a piece of tin, inscribed the Holy Name upon it, and bound it about the neck of the girl, and he put her under a thorn-bush and abandoned her there. An angel carried the babe down to Egypt, where Potiphar adopted her as his child, for his wife was barren. Years later, when Joseph was viceroy, the maidens threw gifts at him to make him look at them. Asenath had nothing that would serve as a present, so she took off the amulet from her neck

> and gave it to him. Thus Joseph became acquainted with her lineage, and he married her, seeing that she was not an Egyptian, but one connected with the house of Jacob through his mother (Ginzberg 1909: II, 38).[1]

Alternatively, these rabbis with second thoughts have Dinah turning up as Job's wife (*Gen. R.* 57.4), and even imagine her as being betrothed to her own brother Simeon (*Gen. R.* 80.11).

One might ask why the second group of rabbis needed to stray so far from the text. My conjecture is that these rabbis had misgivings. Perhaps they thought she was innocent and had an uneasy conscience about her fate. Thus by filling in the gaps—the silence of the biblical text—these rabbis accounted for Dinah's whereabouts and destiny after the rape. In doing so they supply the tale with closure—a prototype 'happy ending'.

We have seen that there are two ways to view Dinah's fate. One blames her for 'going out', the other views her as pure victim. The midrash reflects the values of its time. On the one hand there was the historical necessity which dictated that women remain locked in a role of stereotypical passivity. This role was dictated by the genuine concern of a people whose physical and spiritual survival was at stake. Rabbis were (and still are) a product of their society's conditioning, and 'could not conceive of any alternatives for women' (Kuzmack 1976: 251). Theirs was a social reality in which 'women [were] inferior to men in economic power, social standing, legal rights, and religious role and importance' (Biale 1984: 14). Thus they glorified the mother-wife role, and denigrated any signs of female initiative or other deviations from the norms of the period. This attitude continues to prevail in some circles in our supposedly modern society (Meiselman 1978). Traditionalists continue to depict negatively those women who are interested in self-fulfillment (Wisse 1992). They do not encourage individual expression. Collective survival is still their overriding concern (Bleich 1980). In contrast, the secularists claim not to need tradition at all, scoffing at those who reject modernity.

1. Ginzberg's retelling of the tale is a composite version of many midrashim. To read the midrash in the original see his very detailed footnote in 1909: V, 336-37.

What should be our attitude toward the text? There is another religious position in Judaism which 'recognizes no stratification of human beings, no inferiority of women to men' (Biale 1984: 14). 'In ultimate moral and spiritual terms' Judaism recognizes that 'a woman's life is equal to a man's' (Biale 1984: 14). If we accept this viewpoint and agree that physical and spiritual survival no longer dictate that women fulfil stereotypical roles, the social role ascribed to women has to be revised.

Feminists reflect these views, and seem to be divided into two camps. A view which is similar to the secularist viewpoint is the ascendancy view of feminism. It aims 'primarily at exposing the androcentric bias or oppressive intention operative within a text, to show the text to be unalterably patriarchal and, therefore, without authority or value' (Tolbert 1983: 119). In its confrontation with tradition the ascendancy view throws out the baby with the bath water.

Then there is the apologetic or equality position which attempts 'to highlight the social, religious and political power of women which has been ignored, overlooked, or hidden by patriarchal hermeneutics' (Tolbert 1983: 119). This approach bridges the traditional male-oriented and the secularist viewpoints.

My position as a religious feminist Jew is that we have the obligation to write women back into the tradition by continuing the process of midrash, which insures that the Bible remains relevant to all its readers.

I refuse to accept the extreme position of a feminist who is so locked into the ascendancy view that she criticizes 'a modern biblical scholar' for not considering Dinah's rape and the destruction of the town of Shechem equally heinous crimes. Judith Ochshorn asks,

> Is the rape of a woman not a 'heinous crime', and was Dinah not also helpless? Do the friendships and pacts among men assume greater moral weight than sexual violence committed against women? Is the sense of outrage over the rape of Dinah insufficient provocation for her brother's anger? Are the lives and integrity of women dispensable and subordinate to the alliances among men? (Ochshorn 1981: 207).

She implies that *one woman's rape* justified the wholesale killing of *an entire town*. In saying this she follows in the

tradition of her namesake, Judith, a radical 'feminist' of the second century BCE who glorified Simeon's and Levi's deed as an act of pious retribution (Jdt. 9.2-4).

What about Dinah? Is she only an object, to be used to make a point? By whom? By traditionalists? By extreme feminists? Does no one care about her pain? None of the traditional midrashim takes into account what Dinah the daughter thinks about her plight.

Most modern Jewish feminists have chosen to avoid this story for a good reason.[1] To them Dinah symbolizes 'the radical separation of women from the mainstream of Jewish life; the silence of women; the women as sexual commodity' (Salkin 1986: 289).

In 1985, during a professional crisis, I turned to the story of Dinah for solace. To effect a 'self-cure' and distance myself from my own plight, I wrote a modern eisegetical tale[2] about Dinah describing my feelings of betrayal by the institution for which I had worked for 10 years. These feelings, I later discovered, were identical to those shared by some victims of injustice. These feelings were of a person 'who no longer shared a sense of control...[who] had become uncertain about her ability to control her environment and to care for herself in it...' (Feinauer 1982: 35). Ironically this quotation comes from an article entitled 'Rape: A Family Crisis'. What Dinah and I share is silence.

I wondered whether Dinah's (and my) silence was really a stifled scream. Are we women so traumatized that we are unable to speak up for our rights? Would I, the victim of circumstance, have behaved differently if I were a man?

1. In an unpublished paper delivered at the First Jerusalem International Conference on Women and Judaism 1986 ('Halacha and the Jewish Woman'), I reviewed several twentieth-century sources on Dinah, written for the most part by men. At this conference I also publicized my tale about Dinah.

2. See the introduction to 'Why I Write Midrash', in Graetz 1985: ii. Since my distribution of this tale, there has been a great interest in Dinah. Women are now confident enough to face this story and build on it. Cf. Metzger (1989), Umansky (1990), Azen and Robinson (1989), and Arnold (1981).

I depicted a Dinah who tried to shrink into herself, for she did not trust her environment. Her life had been ruined by the rape since women who did not marry in biblical times usually had no other options for self-fulfillment. Her parents betrayed her; her brothers killed the only person she could marry—a man who clearly loved her and repented his violent act. Her body was no longer hers. Despite her despair, she concluded her woeful tale with (what to me at least was) a rhetorical question. Dinah asked, 'Do I want to be left alone to sit on the sidelines of life? Forever?' (Graetz 1985: 78).

Since I wrote this midrash, several other midrashim have been published about Dinah. The purpose inherent in these revisionings is to inspire our daughters who may still be sitting silently and patiently on the sidelines of Jewish life, waiting for external forces to liberate them:

> Unlike the biblical Dina, growing numbers of Jewish feminists are refusing to remain silent. If we are to create, or attempt to create, a non-patriarchal, non-androcentric Judaism—a Judaism in which the experiences of both women and men are seen as central—we Jewish women need to reclaim our voices. In so doing, we need to imagine what our foremothers, like Dina, might have said, if only they had spoken (Umanksy 1990: 33).

Rather than decry 'the patriarchal structure of the Bible—we should attempt a reading that penetrates beneath the surface to uncover the awareness that the biblical narrator was either not fully conscious of or took pains not to reveal...' (Aschkenasy 1981: 51). Readers such as these tend to view Dinah in a different light. They do not see her as a 'passive, submissive woman who was raped, crushed, and marked for the rest of her life' (Sheres 1990: 136). Dinah's story has the potential to demonstrate that liberation must come from within, often after great suffering and struggle; that although our past influences us, it neither governs us nor permanently cripples us. Our past is a far more 'liberating environment than the pseudo-past created by male-chauvinist mythographers who invoked a past that never was'.[1]

1. Personal communication conveyed to me by Dr. Mayer Gruber of the Bible Department at Ben Gurion University.

BREAKING FREE OF THE BIBLICAL FRAME-UP: UNCOVERING THE WOMAN IN GENESIS 39

Alice Bach

> The angel of the Lord told me and instructed me that women are more easily overcome by the spirit of promiscuity than are men. They contrive in their hearts against men, then by decking themselves out they lead men's minds astray. (*T. Reub.* 5.3)

> One can find everything in a text, provided one is irrespectful toward it (Umberto Eco).

Getting at her Story

Getting at the suppressed story of the female in male-authored literature requires both filling the gaps in the narrative and reading the text for the patriarchal agenda that has shaped the telling of the story. Some time ago Harold Bloom, in a moment of anxiety, envisaged that

> the first true break with literary continuity will be brought about in generations to come, if the burgeoning religion of Liberated Woman spreads from its clusters of enthusiasts to dominate the West. Homer will cease to be the inevitable precursor, and the rhetoric and forms of our literature may then break at last from tradition (1975: 33).

Bloom's confrontational description maintains polar tensions of gender, and would exchange one hierarchy for another. The kind of feminist reading that I offer here does not lay any claim to dominate the West, not even a desire to dominate the reading of biblical texts. Rather, getting at her story changes the rules of the politics of gender, by emphasizing the partial nature of each critic's reading.

One concern of literary theorists is the question of boundaries in filling gaps. I have adopted for this study Bal's method in which historical and literary texts can be made to read and rework each other. Fortunately for such an intertextual method, the writings of the Second Temple period and subsequently rabbinic midrashic literature provide a rich taproot for this endeavor. Using the postbiblical and rabbinic midrashic versions to fill the gaps of the biblical story assures that the reading remains within the boundary of the tradition. However, the reading also steps outside the tradition. By using the post-biblical texts to fill some of the gaps of the biblical story, one is able to produce a new text, a new story, one that breaks through the biblical frame-up. In a circular version, reading backward and comparing the gap-filled story with its hole-y version allows one to comment on biblical narrative design, to examine the narrator's agenda.

A second layer of reading is necessary in order to free the reader from the patriarchal codes that have controlled traditional readings. The feminist perspective both invites a reader to give voice to the female figure in the text and seeks to escape being seduced by the narrator into accepting his view. Of course my reading is also partial, not prescriptive, and as such may stand as a reminder that there is no impartial reading.

Narrative re-collects, re-members, repeats, in order for there to be an escape from repetition, in order for there to be change or progress. As Peter Brooks has observed, narrative, like psychotherapy, aspires to 'a narrative redescription of reality', to a 'new story' (1984: 235, 285).[1] The literary text is the place where writer and reader, narrator and narratee engage in the dialogue that produces the new literary work. Comparing the story in Genesis 39 of Joseph and the Egyptian woman I call Mut-em-enet with its re-collected, re-membered version in the *Testament of Joseph*, a section of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, provides an opportunity to examine the literary effect of this new story created from the skeleton of the old.

Most interpreters read only the first narrative level of a story,

1. See also Schafer 1981: 25-49 for a discussion of 'narrative redescription'.

the one focalized through the narratorial voice. For those concerned with gender readings, however, the reading strategy of embedding allows the female literary figure at least to whisper underneath the narrator's full voice. My reading of the texts in this study follows in part Mieke Bal's model of the embedded text that permits the fictive reconstruction of the woman's story within a man's story (Bal 1977; 1981: 41-59). In Genesis 39 one moment of focalization through the female literary figure occurs: in v. 13, when Mut-em-enet *sees* (realizes) that Joseph has left his tunic in her hands. For a moment we see what Mut-em-enet saw: we can follow her train of thought. The warm tunic in her hand is the evidence that drives her subsequent dialogue. However, this moment of focalization reveals only a fragment of an embedded story.

Because the narrator has succeeded in effectively silencing Mut-em-enet with the powerful frame of his story—he has already told us in v. 10 that 'as often as she tried to coerce Joseph day after day, he did not yield to her desire to lie beside her, to be with her'—no other moments of feminine focalization allow us to get at the suppressed story of the woman. Thus, in Genesis 39 the search for the woman embedded does not produce a very full picture of Mut-em-enet. But in spite of the narrator's victory in suppressing the woman's story in Genesis 39, I suggest that there is a way to recreate Mut-em-enet's story, her version of what happened in bed with Joseph. The literary strategy that allows the reader to imagine her story is one that links the biblical text with the embedded texts found in the versions of subsequent narrators.

An integral part of this reading strategy, then, is to read beyond the ending of the biblical story, beyond the *telos* of crime and punishment and its regimen of righteous resolutions.[1] Another strategy developed by Bal, connected to the first, is to wrest interpretations from traditional commentators who have filled the textual gaps with discourse born of their own agenda. Women's alienation from the literary canon has partially been due to the fact that the literary works of men reflect chiefly a

1. See DuPlessis 1985, who analyzes women's fiction of the twentieth century in this manner.

male view of life which is not necessarily women's experience. Thus, the text I am producing gives speech to the silenced or suppressed female figure, and tries to understand how social restrictions have shaped women's lives. As such, my text becomes a political document, as well as one of literary criticism. Since the biblical expansions and commentators have concentrated on Joseph's story, we readers have been taught to experience the woman as strange and alien. Reading as a woman, then, requires reversal of the self and other. To achieve this transformation one must refuse to be flooded by the otherness of the author's thoughts. Reading as a woman means not being carried away by the magic of his story.

To reconstruct her story, I shall look primarily at the narrative of the *Testament of Joseph* and later midrashim, later rememberings of his story. Parenthetically it should be noted that the theological code in the *Testaments* has been used to justify an implicit moral code, the one that extols the pious Jewish hero for turning away from the sexual advances of the woman, while at the same time the woman's sexual desire is universally condemned. The technique becomes a restrictive code by devaluing the other, or as Hayden White identifies it, 'ostensive self-definition by negation' (White 1972: 5). The interpreters, both ancient and modern, have been led by the gender code to enhance, not to eliminate the differences between the two versions, his story and her story. The gender code accomplishes this 'by structuring those differences according to the division between men and women on which the thematic network is based' (Bal 1988b: 111).

The same interpreters, in my view, have closed off the opportunity to multiple readings by genre stereotyping. By prefacing and suffusing their interpretations of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* with the description of a testament as a combination of parenetic and apocalyptic genres, scholars and critics have guaranteed the meaning of the literary work. Such prescription insures a one-note reading for texts based on shared similarities of form and language. Reading a work within the confining category of genre conveys the values of the social system which it reflects, supports and encompasses. There is also an element of elitism in genre stereotyping, in which the

theorist preserves authority over the text and over its less expert readers.

Joseph's Version: Embedding the Woman

In literature, as Genette has emphasized, the idea of what makes a particular personality probable or realistic differs for every society and for every era of Western society. A literary personage is always a construction in language of a network of relations and associations. It is an element in a text or, in semiotic terms, a signifier analogous functionally to other signifying elements in the text.[1] In Genette's terms the behavior of both Joseph and Mut-em-enet seen through the lens of the ancient world is 'realistically' portrayed. He embraces all the characteristics of the hero: loyal and pious, strong enough to resist the temptations of the female. She is the out-of-control female, slave to her passions. Read through the conventions of the moral code, his story is one of honor, hers one of shame. On the other hand, as I shall argue in the final section of this essay,

1. The question of 'focalization', a term of Genette's, has been itself the focus of literary debate. See Genette 1972: 49-70; also Genette 1988 for text subsequently critiqued by Rimmon and Bal. For a collection of essays which contain both the method and application of Genette's narratological method to works of Stendahl, Flaubert and Proust, see Genette 1982. Genette's most recent reconsideration of point of view, voice, and focalization and his response to his critics on these subjects can be found in *Narrative Discourse Revisited* (1988).

Shlomith Rimmon (1976: 33-62) alters Genette's concept of focalization by arguing that 'focalization depends on the narrator and on the amount of information imparted to the reader by the narrator' (p. 59). The difficulty with this observation is that the reader will always be controlled by the narrator's version of the story. Bal (1985a: 111) has offered another way of understanding the difference between the focalizer and the narrator by her observation that one needs to distinguish between 'the vision through which the elements are presented and on the other hand, the identity of the voice that is verbalizing the vision'. Bal's method of distinguishing between the dominant narratorial voice and the suppressed voice of the other is invaluable to those who wish to offer readings that give voice to the story of the silenced characters in a literary text.

a literary character is more than an abstract literary function. Inevitably, as readers we endow characters with three-dimensional lives of thoughts and feelings similar to our own. When one reads like a woman, therefore, one needs to resist the conventions of *vraisemblance* that assure the reader, 'this is the only way the story could have happened'. Thus, one goal of my reading is 'to destroy the myth inside and outside ourselves' (Wittig 1981: 50-51).

In analyzing the narratological aspects of the *Testament of Joseph*, the effect of voice becomes primary. The device of first-person narration permits the character of Joseph to filter the events of the story through his own point of view. Presented with apparent objectivity, the story bristles with slanted conclusions. Viewed from a structuralist approach, one can see the male story as the opposite of the embedded female story. Since the *Testament of Joseph* account presents Joseph as the subject, and Mut-em-enet the object, the intention of the story as told by Joseph is to resist the object. For if the righteous man is continuously able to reject the wicked woman, the center will hold. Paternal authority will continue to triumph over unrepressed female sexuality.

If the story's subject and object were reversed, Mut-em-enet might have got her man. The story, admittedly a different one, would allow the subject and object to fall in love, the obstacles to that love to be removed, and a happy-ever-after ending. That is the structure of the biblical story of Abigail and David told in 1 Samuel 25, where the husband conveniently dies, leaving Abigail a widow.[1] It is the romance of *Joseph and Aseneth*, where the improper love object becomes Jewish paragon.[2]

1. David is a biblical hero much attracted to women, unlike Joseph. The only woman who does not excite David is Michal, the one given by her father in the traditional manner. Unlike Joseph, David prefers women who belong to other men. Indeed the future king is anxious to be linked with his paramours. Thus, the husband of Bath-sheba is also dispatched so that the subject can have a clear field to pursue his love object. One wonders how David's story would sound in the mouth of *ho sophron*.

2. For a comparison of Mut-em-enet with these two heroines of Jewish tradition, see below.

The character of Joseph held particular appeal for a Hellenistic audience since he is the Jewish hero struggling for power and position in the foreign/Gentile court. This model was one with which Flavius Josephus, a Jewish official on the fringes of the Roman court, connected himself. Philo, an Alexandrian, could make use of the popularity of Joseph as a biblical figure living and succeeding at the Egyptian court.

A second aspect of Joseph's character that became important during the postbiblical period, a time when erotic themes were being played out dramatically in the works of New Comedy authors and in Greek romantic novels, was his God-assisted ability to hold the line against sexual temptation. In each retelling of Joseph's encounter with a woman (except for the romance *Joseph and Aseneth*) the key issue is adultery, the moral struggle between the good (male) and the wicked (female), between the self (Jewish hero) and the other (foreign/Gentile woman). *Joseph and Aseneth* also has the dichotomy of chastity/pleasure as the primary focus: it is a version of self and other, as in our adultery texts, but in this novel the resolution is marriage, since the foreign/wicked woman converts/is transformed into the self, thus absorbing or eradicating evil. In the adultery texts the good hero triumphs over the wicked, but the dichotomy of good/evil remains—defeated temporarily. As Kugel notes, in postbiblical associations with the biblical Joseph, Joseph's piety was connected specifically with his refusal to succumb to the sexual overtures of the Egyptian woman. 'There can be little doubt that this name [*Yôsēp haṣṣaddîq*] was based on this incident with Potiphar's wife' (Kugel 1990: 25).

In the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* Joseph is the 'ethical model par excellence' (Hollander 1981: 16). In his own story, the *Testament of Joseph*, the hero refers to himself at the beginning as the beloved Israel (1.2), an ambiguous appellation that refers both to his father and to his nation. Young Joseph, as we will learn in the *Testament of Joseph* 3–9, is beloved of a woman, one who is obsessed with him and approaches him time after time for seven years (3.4). Because she is married, and dalliance with a married woman is a capital crime, Joseph sees her love as a threat, raw sexual desire as an overture to death. 'Beloved of Israel' allies Joseph with his father rather than his

mother, with whom the biblical text connects him. The father–son alliance signals the reader that this is a story about an all-powerful father who is able to rescue the hero from brothers who want what he has[1] and a woman who wants him. In his recounting of the ten temptations that prove Joseph to be validated by the symbolic Father ('in ten temptations he showed that I was approved, and in all of them I endured; for endurance is a mighty remedy, and patience gives many good things' [2.7]), Joseph describes the tangle with the woman at great length before he describes in an incidental way the perfidy of his brothers that made him a martyr slave.[2] Thus, the danger from the Egyptian woman is so threatening that Joseph steps outside the chronology of his story in order to emphasize the primary danger of female sexual desire. In fact, in the second sequence of the *Testament of Joseph* narrative, the narrator hero returns again to his purchase by Pentephres, which was engineered by the Egyptian woman.

> About that time the Memphian woman passed by in a chariot
> the wife of Pentephres, with great pomp
> and she cast her eyes upon me;
> for the eunuchs had told her concerning me.
>
> Now therefore, try him and set the youth free to be your steward,
> and the God of the Hebrews will bless you,
> for grace from heaven is upon you (*T. Jos.* 12.1, 3).

Thus, in Joseph's version, in spite of the moral code which refers the interpretation to the ultimate victory of society's demands

1. The fact that Joseph was beloved of his father clearly disturbs the brothers. Joseph's special status is mentioned in *T. Sim.* 2.6; *T. Dan.* 1.5, *T. Gad* 1.5, and *T. Jos.* 10.5, where Joseph reminds us again that 'my brothers know how my father loved me, and yet I did not exalt myself in my heart'. One advantage of monologue is, of course, the lack of response to self-aggrandizing statements. The reader, knowing the biblical Joseph's arrogant nature may smile at his unwitting reminder that old age has not shriveled his ego.

2. Kugel argues (1990: 23) rightly that in the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, 'the incident with Potiphar's wife is the main—virtually the only—item on the agenda: Joseph narrates it in some detail, then returns to it again afterwards with more particulars'.

over individual erotic desire, the woman is his rescuer. The wife of Pentephres is the one who saves him from the Ishmaelite merchant who has enslaved him, a detail that does not appear in the biblical version, Josephus, Philo or *Jubilees*. However, Joseph is so threatened by her pursuit of him, and so involved in defending his boundaries from her invasion, he never experiences her act as one of rescue.

Much like the martyrs of Maccabaean literature, Joseph feels threatened with death from several sides, although the most severe threat comes from the woman who would take his honor as well as his life.[1] The brothers set out to kill him but, as Joseph reminds us,

> they let me down into a pit, and the Most High brought me up again. I was sold as a slave and the Lord made me free; I was taken into captivity and His strong hand protected me; I was beset with hunger and the Lord himself nourished me. (*T. Jos.* 1.4-5).[2]

Having referred to the brothers' dastardly deed, although in no detail, Joseph focuses his extensive narrative upon the greater trouble with the Egyptian woman. Returning to the testamentary frame of the narrative, it becomes apparent that, all these years later, what Joseph the patriarch wants his sons to remember as the focus of his life story is his successful struggle against sexual desire. The central figure of the *Testament of Joseph*, then, is the primary adversary who threatened the hero with death, 'the shameless woman (*hē pornē*) urging me to

1. The motif of transgression, a challenge to commit *paranomia* is also frequent in martyr traditions. See 4 *Macc.* 5.13, 17, 20, 27; 8.14; 9.3ff.; also Philo, *Somn.* 2.124. Hollander and de Jonge, note that in the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* 'both aspects seem to be combined; like the tyrant, the woman wants to bring the pious man to transgress the law' (Hollander and de Jonge 1985: 370).

2. It is interesting to note a similarity between the testimony Joseph gives of God's rescuing him from captivity, hunger, loneliness, sickness and prison with the works of mercy as described in Isa. 58.7 and Jesus' statement to the disciples in Mt. 25.35-36, which recounts the same combination of trials as Trito-Isaiah and the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*. Hollander notes the influence of Psalms of individual thanksgiving in both style and terminology (1981: 19-20).

transgress with her; but the God of Israel my father guarded me from the burning flame' (*T. Jos.* 2.2). Thus God, the symbolic father, rescues Joseph from the predatory woman, much as Israel the father has rescued the child Joseph from his jealous siblings.

The language of the psalm of thanksgiving,[1] in which Joseph frames his story, sets the conditions for reading the story. Joseph is the hero; his adversaries are the evil characters against whom God protects him. Thus the psalm found at the opening of the work, acts to suppress the story of the woman by structuring the story as the rescue of the hero by the deity. God is on the side of Joseph. The traditional reader joins this elite 'we' against the adversarial female 'they'.

A glance at a few of Joseph's statements in the *Testament of Joseph* will illustrate how they prejudice the reader:

1. 'She pretended to regard me as a son' (3.7);
2. 'she drew me into impurity' (3.8);
3. 'she came to me under the pretense of instruction' (4.4);
4. 'she sent me food mingled with witchcraft' (6.1);[2]
5. 'her officiousness was to lead astray the soul' (6.2);
6. 'in her madness she was holding fast to my clothes' (8.3).

When each of her actions is focalized through Joseph's fear, it becomes an action cloaked in menace. Joseph says, 'she came to me *under the pretense* of instruction', but what evidence is there to support such a charge? When Aseneth, another Egyptian woman in a similar situation, decides to convert in order to be a

1. See Hollander and de Jonge 1985: 367-68 for structure and analysis of the *T. Jos.* 1.4–2.6 as psalm of individual thanksgiving. Their argument is that the psalm in *Testament of Joseph* indicates a later development of the type of psalm found in Dan. 2.20-23; Sir. 51.1-12; *Pss. Sol.* 2, 13, 15.

2. The idea of love-philtres and other dangerous magic through which women try to seduce helpless men reflects male fear of female feeding turned into death-dealing. The parade example of this proof of female treachery in the Bible is Jael's offering of milk to Sisera before nailing him. For a description of the thematic elements that structure this scene, see Bal 1988b: 62-64. For an analysis of *pharmakon* within the discourse of love magic in Euripides' *Hippolytus*, see Goff 1990: 48-54.

suitable wife for Joseph, no hint of duplicity accompanies the lengthy and laudatory description of her prayer, fasting and conversion. In my view Aseneth's conversion is valid and Mut-em-enet's a ruse because Aseneth is a suitable desexualized bride and Mut-em-enet is an improper woman, ignoring societal strictures, reaching for erotic freedom.

There are twelve brief episodes in Joseph's testamentary account that play 'time after time' on the motif of Joseph as the victim of passion:[1]

1. She punishes and threatens Joseph many times (3.1-6).
2. She pretends to regard Joseph as a son (3.7).
3. She draws him 'openly into impurity' (3.8).
4. She flatters Joseph (4.1-3).
5. She pretends to want to convert to his religion (4.4-5).
6. She offers to kill her husband to marry Joseph (5.1-4).
7. She sends Joseph magical food (6.1).
8. She falls ill and threatens suicide (7.1-5).
9. She tries to force Joseph into a sexual act (8.2-5).
10. She accuses him and he is sent to prison.
11. She offers to get him released if he will satisfy her (9.1-4).
12. She falls ill but continues to visit Joseph in prison.

Each episode begins with an action of the woman followed by a reaction from Joseph. Clearly she is the initiator each time. The final two verses of the story (9.4-5) remind the reader of Joseph's remarkable achievement, resisting a woman who has tried every conceivable avenue of seduction.

> How often, though she was ill,
> did she come down to me by midnight
> and listened to my voice as I prayed.
> And understanding her groanings[2] I held my peace.

1. I follow, with a few minor changes, the structure suggested by Hollander and de Jonge. It is interesting to note that the structure as given by these interpreters emphasizes a reading from Joseph's point of view. They divide the story into ten episodes, whereas my structure has twelve episodes.

2. 'Groanings' or 'sighings' is used three times in Joseph's story: *T. Jos.* 7.2; 8.5; 9.4. The Greek word *stenagmos* does not necessarily imply

> For when I was in her house,
> she used to bare her arms and breasts and legs,
> that I would meet her;
> for she was very beautiful
> splendidly adorned in order to beguile me.
> And the Lord guarded me from her attempts.

The portrait of the woman is consistent. The 'time after time' motif of her villainry continues and parallels the 'time after time' of his righteousness. Ill and out of control with her obsessive love, Mut-em-enet continues to visit Joseph in his prison. In my reading the *stenagmoi*, 'groanings', reflect the depth of her pain, sounds that might emanate from a woman lamenting the impossibility of her desire. The narrator hears a malevolent sound, urgent, sexual, which he connects with her nakedness.

Even though Joseph has previously described the *stenagmoi* as sounds of lost purity, threatening to pollute him, he surrenders for an instant to sexual fantasy. Finally, late into the story, there is confirmation of the woman's beauty. The beauty of the hero has been mentioned at the outset. It is of course his beauty that has first aroused Mut-em-enet. Nowhere in the biblical account or in the expanded accounts is the reader provided with a physical description of the woman. For just a flicker of an instant in Joseph's narration, the curtain of purity is parted and the focalization shifts. The reader sees what Joseph saw: *bare arms and breasts and legs, very beautiful, splendidly adorned* (9.4). Immediately after presenting this erotic picture, Joseph interprets the woman's body as alien: 'splendidly adorned, *in order to* beguile me'. Joseph returns to his 'understanding' her groanings as sexual, and therefore of evil design. Finally, he cools his heated sensual description of her with a pious reference to God, who 'guarded me from her attempts'.

In a twist of ironic sexual politics, her sexual/spiritual malaise is bared to an indifferent Joseph. When Mut-em-enet saw Joseph naked and powerless, being beaten by a eunuch of the

pain is indicated: *apo stenagmou tēs kardias mou*, 'the sighing of my heart'. While the context of *T. Jos.* 7.2, 8.5, 9.4 would indicate sexual groanings, since emotions connected to sexuality are the only ones attributed to the Egyptian woman, the term could indicate a woman profoundly sick at heart.

court, instead of turning away from him, she tried to rescue him from his pursuers.

> And he [the eunuch] commanded me to be beaten naked.
> But the Memphian woman was looking through the window
> while I was being beaten,
> and she sent to her husband, saying
> Your judgment is unjust, for you punish a free man
> who has been stolen as if he were a transgressor (*T. Jos.* 14.1).

The sympathy she offered the naked man is withheld from her. He undermines the power of her text by not taking it seriously, by displaying indifference to her declaration of love. Our story exhibits a motif similar to that of 1 Samuel 25, where the woman rescues the outlawed young man beloved of the God of Israel. Each woman attempts to place herself into the public confrontation between the powerful husband and the desperate young hero. Yet the narratorial voice renders opposite judgments on the two women: Abigail is the good wife from Proverbs and the wife of Potiphar is the strange woman. The plot reflects this judgment in the behavior of the two female figures after their confrontation with the hero: Abigail returns home and waits for David to act (proper behavior); Mut-em-enet pursues the hero with clear sexual intention (improper behavior). After the iconoclastic moment in the biblical story, sexual hierarchy has been reinstated; in the *Testament of Joseph* the female figure perseveres in her attempt to challenge that hierarchy.

A pattern emerges through *Testament of Joseph* 3–9, in which each mention of the woman's disruptive sexual action is balanced and defused by an admirable reaction from Joseph, *ho sōphron*. The talisman quality of *sōphrosunē* that cools the passion of the Egyptian woman is mentioned in 6.7 and 9.2. The reader is not permitted to lose sight of the parenetic/salvific frame: 'The wickedness of the ungodly has no power over those who worship God in righteousness (*sōphrosunē*) (6.7). The character of Joseph projects the attitude of a man in distress who prays, fasts and weeps in his extensive request to God for deliverance. Thus, the framed prayer of thanksgiving in *Testament of Joseph* 1 prefigures Joseph's 'time after time' prayers throughout his story.

His most frequent action is to pray for deliverance:

1. 'Going into my room, I prayed to the Lord' (3.3).
2. 'I lay upon the ground in sackcloth and prayed and begged God that the Lord would deliver me from the Egyptian woman' (4.3).
3. 'I gave myself more to fasting and prayer, that God might deliver me from her' (4.8).
4. 'I prayed to the Lord' (7.4).
5. 'I knelt before the Lord all day together with all the night; and about dawn I rose up, weeping the while and prayed for a release from the Egyptian woman' (8.1).
6. '[She listened to] my voice as I prayed' (9.4).

Joseph also tells us three times that he fasted, 'for God loves him who fasts with chastity (*sōphrosunē*)) in a den of darkness more than him who lives luxuriously in licentiousness (*akolasias*) in chambers of a palace'.

1. 'And I fasted (*enesteuon*) in those seven years' (3.4).
2. 'I drank no wine, nor for three days did I take my food' (3.5).
3. 'And I gave myself even more to fasting (*nesteian*)' (4.8).

He tells us four times that he wept:

1. 'I wept (*eklaion*) for the Egyptian woman of Memphis' (3.6).
2. 'I sorrowed (*elupethen*) unto death...and I lamented (*epenthēsa*) for her' (3.9).
3. 'When he had gone out, I wept (*eklaion*)' (6.3).
4. 'About dawn, I got up, weeping (*dakruon*) all the time' (8.1).

The biblical Joseph, who bragged of his superiority in Genesis 37, has undergone no change in personality. In this Second Temple version, speaking as an old man, the character is still bragging, this time of his spiritual superiority. The parenesis is clear: every heated female evil intention is met with cool male virtue.

In my view, the structure which appears to support the story of Joseph's beleaguered years in the house of Potiphar also

presents a portrait of a woman in love. It is the narratorial frame that polarizes the action, setting up an evil/good dichotomy and prescribing the reader's conclusions of the dangers of uncontrolled female sexuality. This frame functions, similarly to the frame in Genesis 39, to guide the reading of the text.

Within the fabula itself, there is also an intention to direct the reading. Joseph, the primary actor in the text, aspires to power. In order to achieve his aim, he must exonerate himself of the accusations leveled by the wife of his master. Her aim, to take him as a lover, is clearly at cross purposes with his aim, to accrue power and position in the society in which he finds himself. Since the fabula recounts his story, her program fails.

But Joseph does not achieve his aim without help. There are other male figures in the Genesis text: Potiphar, a representative of the social order, who causes the rise and then the fall of Joseph and Potiphar's male servants, who have no functional role in the structure of the fabula because they do not cause functional events. This is not to say, however, that they are not important as figures who represent social stratification.

It is interesting that the unnamed male servants who hear the story from Mut-em-enet (Gen. 39.14-15) have not fired the reader's imagination. They are servants like Joseph; they are Egyptian unlike Joseph. Much has been made of Mut-em-enet's clever way of manipulating them, by fanning the flames of ethnic competition, referring to Joseph as *'îš 'ibrî*, 'the Hebrew'. But nothing has been made of the effect of their silence and inaction in the light of their mistress's accusation of rape.

The biblical text does not provide even a glimmer of their response to the woman. She has screamed out *bᵉqôl gādôl*, 'in a loud voice', and they have responded with silence. However, their stolid presence serves a narrative function. Since the reader is given no response from these background figures, one is left a gap commodious enough to accommodate many possibilities. (1) The servants had been similarly propositioned by their mistress and were relieved to see another man caught in her vise. (2) The servants were embarrassed at her prevarication, having glimpsed the frightened fleeing Joseph. (3) The servants were delighted to see the much privileged Hebrew servant in trouble. The one suggestion that seems unlikely, at least to this

trouble. The one suggestion that seems unlikely, at least to this reader, is that the servants' silence implies sympathy with the woman who is claiming rape.

The total lack of reaction of the male servants to the woman's startling accusation keeps them from any interaction with her. One can imagine that her frustration over Joseph's rejection was enlarged by the silence of the servants. In the biblical version, then, the woman presents her case to these servants, who exhibit no reaction. Her frustration must be multiplied when she presents a second, slightly altered, version of the story to her husband. Her story does elicit action this time, although not a direct verbal response. The narrator informs the reader that 'his anger was ignited' (v. 19). But Potiphar does not articulate his anger, he does not match Mut-em-enet's direct speech with an outraged one of his own. Rather he shows his loyalty to his wife through his action, putting the offensive Joseph in jail. Every reader knows the proper punishment for rape is death.

For a second time Mut-em-enet's voluble accusation has been met by male impassivity. The combination of the servants' lack of response with Potiphar's tepid one suggests a tightly structured society with strong male bonding, in which the female character is unsupported against a range of men. This male solidarity asserts the powerful social order arrayed against the female dissimulator: the shame of Joseph in being imprisoned on the word of a woman is eradicated by the honor of his loyalty to his God and to his master. By not speaking against him, the servants have increased the display of honor among men. Their silence is similar to the explanation Joseph presents of his own silence in prison, 'I wanted to weep, but I restrained myself that I should not put my brothers to shame' (*T. Jos.* 15.3).

In the *Testament of Joseph* as well as the versions found in Josephus, Philo and *Jubilees*, there are no male servants. In the *Testament of Joseph*, the most expansive of the Second Temple recollections of the story, the narrator Joseph fashions a tale for his sons in which there are two poles of activity: himself and the erotic evil woman. In order to emphasize the tug of power between them, there are no extraneous characters to distract the reader's attention from the male–female struggle. In

fabula indicates the degree to which the fabula is subjective (Bal 1977: 32). The aim of this fabula appears to be different from that in Genesis. In the *Testament of Joseph* power and position is not the goal so much as moral purity. Other men would clutter the stage in this fabula: for Joseph wants to impress upon his sons that his *sōphrosunē*, a gift from God, has allowed him to resist sexual temptation. Thus, the fabula will not deflect any of the male power from the figure of Joseph.

Mut-em-enet's Version

Those interested in a feminist reading need not despair. Joseph's version may have stood unchallenged by interpreters for centuries, but his story has been remembered. Attending to the midrashic gap-filling of the biblical story allows a reader to uncover Mut-em-enet's story. The distance between the respective psychological landscapes of the chaste male and the lusty female is reflected in the structure of the *Testament of Joseph*. The fear of the male, threatened by the manipulative female, drives his story. In spite of the strategy of first-person narration in which the character Joseph prescribes the reading of his story, searching for the embedded story allows glimmers of the woman's story to come through the fabula. The male–female dichotomy and its resultant tensions structure the work. Joseph's fear and shame stand as the obstacle between her desire and satisfaction.

There are strong moments of female focalization in the *Testament of Joseph* through which her story asserts itself. Remember that remarkably focalized scene in which Mut-em-enet sees the naked Joseph being beaten? It is Mut-em-enet who rescues Joseph from the Ishmaelite merchant:

> But the Memphian woman was looking through the window
> while I was being beaten,
> and she sent to her husband, saying
> Your judgment is unjust, for you punish a free man
> who has been stolen as if he were a transgressor (*T. Jos.* 14.1).

Even in Joseph's account, she is his protector. While Joseph reports her initial kindness to him to contrast it with her eventual perfidy, we can extract pieces of her story even from

tual perfidy, we can extract pieces of her story even from Joseph's biased account. As Joseph recalls the events from the time of his arrival in Egypt as a slave to his entrance into Pentephres' house, the reader is told of Mut-em-enet's gradual invasion of Joseph's world: first the male enclave of the marketplace, then the intimate world of his body.

Her persistence structures the second half of the *Testament of Joseph*, much as it did the first. Her attraction to Joseph is no momentary whim. Mut-em-enet's sexual desire is the engine that turns the action. She urges her husband to buy the slave and free him. All the while the merchant is being tried by Pentephres for stealing the slave, and Joseph is being beaten, the woman continues to press for Joseph's release. After the trial, she continues to try to possess Joseph. When she is told by a double-dealing eunuch that the merchants are demanding too large a price for the boy (16.3), she sends a second eunuch to bargain for the young man:

> Even if they demand two minae[1] of gold
> take care not to spare gold,
> only buy the boy and bring him (*T. Jos.* 16.4).

The pattern has been set: the woman's tenacity is emphasized even before she has spoken a word to Joseph. According to the *Testament of Joseph*, her obsession began when she saw him in the market and intensified when she saw him naked. The biblical text reports only that the woman saw Joseph (39.7), but does not provide such rich detail. Neither the narrator Joseph nor subsequent exegetes comment on the woman's having seen Joseph naked.[2] There are rabbinic and modern speculations about

1. A monetary unit, equivalent to 100 drachmas, from the Hebrew *mānēh*.

2. Rabbinic tradition is filled with speculation about whether Joseph participated in sexual activity with his master's wife. The speculation comes from the expression *la'ᵃśôt mᵉlā'ktô* (Gen. 39.11), which the rabbis interpret 'to satisfy sexual desire'. *Gen. R.* 87.6 insists that Joseph declined her invitation, since he knew that to lie with the woman in this world would assure him of lying next to her in the Gehenna of the world to come. R. Samuel b. Nahman argued that Joseph intended to 'do his work', have sex with the woman, but became impotent. Rabbi Isaac pushed the image of Joseph 'doing his work' even further, claiming that

Joseph having fled naked from the bedchamber of the wife of Potiphar in the biblical account since the woman is left holding his garment (Gen. 39.12). Kugel rightly observes that narrative depiction of Joseph as wavering at sexual temptation presents 'a Joseph of flesh and blood with whom others can identify and whose example of sudden repentance others might seek to emulate' (Kugel 1990: 98). No commentator, including Kugel, suggests that the sexual attraction may be mutual, and indeed the woman may have been given to believe that her feelings for the Hebrew servant were returned. The assurance in the *Testament of Joseph* that 'not even in my mind did I yield to her' (*T. Jos.* 9.2), may have been added by an author anxious to avoid his own fantasies about what happened between Joseph and Mut-em-enet.

In the order of the text, the woman's attention had been drawn to Joseph when she saw him in the marketplace, and her passion was intensified when she saw him naked. The sexual connection had been made before the mistress–servant connection. Not only had she heard about the young man from the eunuchs (12.1), but she has defended him to her husband, identifying the Hebrew as one who possesses grace from heaven (12.3). Whether the eunuchs have told her that he is a blessed Hebrew or whether she simply intuits his special relation to the deity must be determined by the reader. But this familiar literary motif of the woman seeing a young man and recognizing him as special to the deity is found in *Joseph and Aseneth* and 1 Samuel 25.[1]

Upon first seeing Joseph from her window, Aseneth realizes that he is the sun from heaven:

fingernails' (87.7). This onanistic metaphor is an interesting echo of the sexual difficulties of Tamar, another foreign woman who seduces one of Jacob's sons. In both instances spilling the seed is the man's reaction to undesirable sexual intercourse initiated by the woman. *B. Sot.* 36b argues both sides: (1) Joseph was blameless; (2) the two of them (Joseph and Mut-em-enet) had planned to sin together.

1. The motif of the unexpected confrontation between the lover (female) and the beloved (male) is frequently found in ancient romances, e.g., Apuleius 5.22–6.5, Chariton 4.1.9. For other examples see Burchard, 1985: 208, n. 6c.

> Aseneth saw Joseph on his chariot and was strongly cut [to the heart] and her soul was crushed and her knees were paralyzed, and her entire body trembled, and it was if she has been been struck with lightning. She feared a great fear. She sighed and said in her heart:
>
> What shall I now do, wretched that I am
> Did I not speak saying that Joseph is coming,
> the shepherd's son from the land of Canaan?
> And now behold the sun from Heaven has come to us
> on his chariot and entered our house today
> and shines in it like a light upon the earth
> (*Jos. Asen.* 6.1-2).

As with Mut-em-enet seeing Joseph, the sight of the beloved produces a powerful reaction in Aseneth. Of course, being a marriageable virgin, Aseneth can say, 'Let my father give me to Joseph for a maidservant and slave and I will serve him for ever' (6.8). Mut-em-enet can cajole her husband into purchasing Joseph, but she cannot overcome the obstacle of her husband. Abigail, upon first meeting the young outlaw David on a mountain pass, recognizes that he is 'fighting the battles of the Lord' (1 Sam. 25.28):

> When Abigail saw David, she hurried and got down from the donkey, and fell before David on her face and bowed to the ground. She fell at his feet and said, 'Upon me alone, my lord, be the guilt; pray let your handmaid speak in your ears and hear the words of your handmaid' (1 Sam. 25.23-24).

Abigail shares with Mut-em-enet the impediment of a husband blocking the fulfillment of her desire for the beloved.[1] After her meeting with David, she leaves him with a poignant request, 'Remember me!' But unlike Mut-em-enet, Abigail is lucky. Her husband dies almost immediately after she has seen her beloved. Abigail gets her man.

A common narrative strategy used to suppress a woman's story is to isolate her within the text. In the biblical version and Second Temple expansions of the story of Mut-em-enet, there are no other women to reflect or respond to her experience. There is no confidant or 'helper' figure, similar to the stock

1. My literary analysis of the story of Abigail appears in *The Pleasure of her Text* (1990: 25-44).

character of the nurse found in the Greek version of the tale, Euripides' *Hippolytus*. Beginning with *Midrash Tanḥuma*, a mediaeval midrashic collection, a new tradition is added to the narrative spun from Genesis 39. In this tradition, the revisioned story changes as it encompasses new characters: the women of the court. At first these Egyptian women are scandalized by the besotted wife of Potiphar. But during a party she arranges to show off her Hebrew servant:

> She took citrons and gave them to each of the women and gave each a knife and then called to Joseph and stood him before them. When they beheld how handsome Joseph was, they cut their hands. She said to them: 'If you do this after one moment, I who see him at every moment, am I not all the more so [justified] in being smitten?' (*Midrash Tanḥuma* Gen. 39.7).[1]

The tradition continues in *Midrash ha-Gadol* and in *Surah* XII of the Qu'ran. The same basic theme, that other women have the same reaction as the wife of Potiphar to the beauty of Joseph, is found in the work of later Muslim poets and exegetes as well as the mediaeval Jewish collections of midrash, *Chronicles of Yerahme'el*, assembled in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, and *Sefer ha-Yaŝar*, an Italian work no earlier than the thirteenth century.[2] When the narrative is focalized through the collective view of the women, a new dimension is added to the story:

> When they saw him, they praised him, and they cut their hands. They said, 'God protect us. This is no mortal, this is none other than a noble angel.' (*Surah* XII.31).

The blame that had been heaped upon the wife of Potiphar for her foolish behavior is forgotten and the women's emotions become a mirror of Mut-em-enet's reactions. The Egyptian women of the court are captivated by Joseph's beauty as was Mut-em-enet. She is no longer isolated, the woman who

1. As translated in Kugel 1990: 29. I was unable to find this episode in the Buber recension of *Midrash Tanḥuma*.

2. For an extensive, detailed discussion of the medieval development of the theme he refers to as 'The Assembly of Ladies', see Kugel 1990: ch. 2.

behaves improperly. The astonishment of the other women at the sight of Joseph assures the reader that Mut-em-enet has behaved just like a woman.

The episode in these later versions remains under narratorial control, and thus imparts the traditional view that all women are equally treacherous when led by their passions. But the isolation surrounding the female figure in the earlier versions, the isolation that makes her response to Joseph appear unique and her love obsessive and strange, is altered by the scene in which other women confirm her response as universal. Comparing this *mise en abyme* text[1] embedded within the larger narrative with the biblical version, in which there are no women to reflect Mut-em-enet's action and feelings, will allow us to fill some of the silence surrounding the solitary female figure in the biblical version.

The prefiguring effect of the *mise en abyme* text is maintained in *Midrash Tanḥuma* because the reader is already familiar with the primary conflict between the lovestruck Mut-em-enet and the beautiful young Joseph. The reaction of the women, who inflict pain upon themselves with the blades of their fruit knives after beholding Joseph, foreshadows the bloody outcome of Mut-em-enet's having first seen Joseph. In narratological terms the subtext, or embedded fabula, found in the *Tanḥuma* is a sign of the primary fabula, our root story of Mut-em-enet and Joseph.[2] When the character of Mut-em-enet says in the *Tanḥuma* to her friends, 'If you do this after one moment, I who see him at every moment, am I not all the more so [justified] in being smitten?', she is attempting to align herself with her friends, to normalize her obsession. Bal has observed about this incident as it appears in Mann's novel, *Joseph in Egypt*, 'she

1. A *mise en abyme* text is an embedded text that presents a story which resembles the primary fabula and may be taken to be a sign of the primary fabula. For a description of this mirror-text and the ways in which it may be related to the primary fabula, see Bal 1985a: 144-50.

2. Bal has analyzed Mann's use of this tradition in 'Myth à la lettre' (see this volume), in which she observes, 'Mut-em-enet planned this event with the explicit purpose of making herself understood. She wants her friends to *understand* her love at the very same moment they *know* it; the difference is identification' (below, p. 358).

[Mut-em-enet] planned this event with the explicit purpose of making herself understood'.[1] I would add to that observation that Mut-em-enet hoped through the power of a community of women to deflect disapproval and judgment from herself.

Another aspect of the woman's story that is suppressed in the biblical version is what happened to her after Joseph is sent to prison. The reader is told nothing of the wife of Potiphar after the episode in which her husband, responding to her accusation, puts Joseph into prison. Eliminating an account of her reaction indicates that the woman's emotions are not central to the story. The narrative in the *Testament of Joseph*, then, is important to the task of recovering the woman's story as it indicates Mut-em-enet's love was not extinguished by the satisfaction of revenge. Indeed, her desire to free Joseph from prison is so intense, one might conclude that some other person had been responsible for his incarceration.

This gap of information, this lack of what happened after the momentous scene of accusation, must have confounded early readers. For the *what happened* is remembered in the *Testament of Joseph*. Instead of leaving the story with Joseph in prison, with the character of the woman erased from the subsequent narrative, the story has been extended in time. Indeed the 'time after time' motif of the woman's sexual obsession with the young hero follows him into the recesses of the prison. In the versions of Josephus and Philo, the *sōphrosunē* of the character of Joseph was based upon his ability to deflect the sexual advances of the Egyptian woman. That he is locked inside the prison is the external factor blocking her satisfaction. But the permanent block to her satisfaction is his loyalty to the deity and the social order. It is a version of 'Freud's Masterplot', to use Peter Brooks's term (1984a: 280-300), an urgent sexual desire faces the factors that block satisfaction until finally love and death join together in the climactic thrust of a symbolic *Liebestod*. The death in our story is the literary death of the female figure, whose story is suppressed.

By filling the gaps of Genesis 39 with the Second Temple period version of the story found in the *Testament of Joseph*,

1. Bal, 'Myth à la lettre', p. 358.

one can piece together an imagined story for the woman embedded in the biblical version—embedded so deeply that it is not possible to tell her story without the help of subsequent texts.

Speaking for the Women

The feminist reader, refusing to align herself with the narratorial 'we', joins the ranks of the disloyal and the unfaithful. Such a betrayal of authorial trust implies the denial of patriarchal rule and rejection of the shadow cast by the giant phallic 'I' over everything men write.[1]

One way to ignore that commanding shadow is for the reader to move outside the boundaries of individual texts. To escape the confines of patriarchal readings, I suggest that we break through the isolation of character portraits of individual female characters. Part of the ideological effect of the text is to splinter the power of women, and the most efficient way of accomplishing this effect literarily is to isolate women from each other within textual units and commentaries. Hence, by comparing the portrait of a biblical character with the expansions of her role in postbiblical literature and other uses of the figurative motif in a variety of contemporaneous literatures, I think we can extend our vision of the woman in the text. More vivid portraits can be created when the reader can rely upon more than one view of a character.

The story of Mut-em-enet reflects the uncertainty of her position through the tepid response of her husband to her accusations, the silence of the servants, and Joseph's rejection of her immodest proposals. In my view both the universal story and its expansions reflect a desire to enclose women's uncertainty in an image of woman as only the specular reflection of man, thus serving to perpetuate the system in which all that is visible is masculine.[2] My intention in trying to give voice to the suppressed story of the woman, silenced in both the biblical and

1. For the analysis of the way literary texts reveal a distinctively male narcissism, see Gardiner 1985: 129.

2. Irigaray 1977: 203-17.

postbiblical stories, is then to prevent the seduction of the reader into the writer's world, where women are defined in relation to men, that is, by their sexual identity. To search for whispers of the embedded woman, one must resist the writer's view that Mut-em-enet behaves 'just like a woman'.

MYTH *À LA LETTRE*: FREUD, MANN, GENESIS AND REMBRANDT, AND THE STORY OF THE SON*

Mieke Bal

'The universal story of the Chaste Youth and the Lustful Stepmother is best known to Western readers in the biblical account of Joseph's temptation by the wife of Potiphar and in the Greek myth (later embodied in drama) about Hippolytus and Phaedra'; thus begins an article by John Yohannan on Thomas Mann's version of this 'universal story' (Yohannan 1982). Although Yohannan is well aware of the difference between the innumerable 'versions' and traditions, as his earlier book shows (1968), there is no sign of awareness of the scholar's own projections in the very enterprise of his paper. Indeed, the terms in which *myth* in literature has been discussed are terms denoting *eternity* and *truth*, *similarity* and *imitation*, and the term that summarizes these features, 'universal', does appear in Yohannan's first sentence.

Taking the universality of the *story* for granted, the author detaches Mann's text from its discursive contingency.

* Reprinted from S. Rimmon-Kenan (ed.), *Discourse in Psychoanalysis and Literature* (London: Methuen, 1987): 57-89.

I am grateful to Danielle Keunen for the drawings in Figure 2, and to Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes for indispensible help with the translation of Genesis 39. Both provided me with the discourse I needed in order to take the myths *à la lettre*. Harai Golomb enhanced my point with a few puns he allowed me to adopt. Ben Broos gave me valuable advice and hints on Rembrandt, his immediate predecessors and the conventions of his time. Brian McHale, and the participants of the conference 'Discourse in Psychoanalysis, Literature and the Arts', gave me precious feedback which helped me to improve my text significantly.

Symptomatic of this move is the very word *story* in Yohannan's title: 'Hebraism and Hellenism in Thomas Mann's Story of Joseph and Potiphar's Wife'. Mann never wrote such a story; perhaps he used one. What he wrote was a voluminous novel of over 1200 pages in which he dealt with what he described as 'only an episode, if an important one, in the life of Jacob's son' (Mann 1984: 1987). Mann's explicit metatextual polemics (e.g. pp. 667, 816, 987) and, more importantly, the very choice of a Hebrew myth at the historical moment he wrote the novel, make the attempt, inherent to myth criticism, to insert the text as another *case* in either tradition of a 'universal content' both misplaced and futile: it says precisely nothing about the book, and what it tries to say is false. There can be no question of trying to deal with the novel as a removal from the historical reality of the day, as many scholars have done (e.g. see Apter 1978); if Mann's novel has a mythical flavour, it can only be accounted for *within* its overall metatextual discussion, which has, as one of its most striking features, a questioning of myth itself, of the tradition of this Joseph-myth of timelessness and history, of other versions including the Arabic one (Mann 1984: 987) and of the ideology of the myth the author deals with. The latter critique is explicitly announced in the foreword to the novel, where Mann states,

> *Joseph in Egypt* seems to me unquestionably the artistic zenith of the work, if only on account of the humane vindication that I had undertaken in it, the humanization of the figure of Potiphar's wife, the mournful story of her passionate love of the Canaanite major-domo and her *pro forma* husband (p. xi).

There is much to be said, indeed, for Mann's claim that this ideological stance has led to artistic mastery, and this is certainly not a coincidence. I will give an example of this assumption later. For the moment, I am interested in Mann's use of the term 'story'. As opposed to Yohannan, he is not referring here to some universal, stable, fixed-for-ever content that can only become discursively different but will still remain the same. He is referring to his own, specific account which he provides with the telling adjective 'mournful' and in which he includes the basically absent character Potiphar himself. By

writing about him, including his presence in the story, he signifies his absence differently, elsewhere: in the adjective '*pro forma*' that goes with 'husband'. As a husband, Potiphar is only a signifier, an empty form, and it is the absence of the signified that triggers the story and makes it 'mournful'.

However, if Yohannan uses the word in a different sense he cannot but be trapped by his own discourse, for the power of the individual over language is limited, and the word 'story' does imply the feature that Mann more readily assumes. For Yohannan, too, privatizes what he believes to be universal. The innocence of the youth is taken for granted, which is not the case in Mann's account. The same holds for the lustfulness of the female character. Calling her a *stepmother*, Yohannan wilfully deviates from the very case he is interested in, for there is no stepmother involved with Joseph—unless one interprets the biblical story as a myth of incest, something that psychoanalysis justifies one to do. But that proves my case rather than contradicting it: the 'universal story' becomes a story of the nuclear family, but then there is no 'chaste' youth any more. The oedipal youth is not innocent. In other words, Yohannan starts where he should end: taking for granted a certain interpretation of the biblical story, he checks the possibility of interpreting the episode in Mann's novel, where, indeed, Joseph's innocence is as doubtful as the woman's guilt.

There is nothing wrong with Yohannan's study that is not inherently wrong with myth criticism in general (e.g. Kirk 1972; Vickery 1966). Barthes said long ago that the 'very end of myth is to immobilize the world' (Barthes 1972: 155), and according to Rahv the same holds for myth criticism (Rahv 1966: 108-18). The interest in myth is, according to Rahv, a persistence of romanticism and conservatism occasioned by the fear of history and freedom, of change and making choices, and he concludes, 'the craze for myth is the fear of history' (p. 114). This persistence of the object of study in its approach is quite general; it is clear, for example, in structuralist approaches to myth, like Lévi-Strauss's statement that a myth consists of all its versions (Lévi-Strauss 1963b: 217), which allows him to proceed to the analysis of what these versions have in common. Edmund Leach, one of Lévi-Strauss's followers in biblical analysis, defends this view (1983)

and refers to any attempt at rehistoricizing and specifying the discursive situation of the texts as 'unscrambling the omelette'. Leach's claim, derived from Malinowski's functionalist view that myths function as charters for social actions, should logically lead to a study of the historical position of myths (Malinowski 1926), but this is not what Leach deduces from it. In myth criticism, as in the structural study of myth, a myth is a myth because, under the layers of dust of historically changing signifiers, it remains the same signifier-independent signified, a universal story. The relationship between myth thus viewed and the concept of collective unconscious is more or less taken for granted. The expression matters only as a symptom of its content, and variation matters only as evidence of similarity. No wonder today's psychocritics rarely bother to study myth for its own sake.

Recent developments in narratology (Felman 1981; Brooks 1984b) may help to shed new light on the problem. This 'American narratology' has as its main features a psychoanalytic frame of reference, a priority to discourse and plot as one and the same thing, and a dynamic view of narrative, while historical awareness is frequently thematized. The obvious example is Peter Brooks's characterization of the nineteenth-century novel as structured—that is, within the dynamic view, motivated—by ambition. The idea takes the convincing shape it has in Brooks's analysis of Balzac's *La peau de chagrin* when it is rephrased in terms like desire, death drive and object choice, all pointing at activities that find their counterparts in narrative dynamic itself. It can gain more interest from the specification proposed by Pavel (1984). It is certainly not a coincidence that psychocritics today mould their view in a narratological—that is in an identifiable and historically specific—discourse. As opposed to early analytic readings, modern critical discourse is only acceptable when its concepts are anchored in the literary discourse itself: concepts like desire as a drive of the plot are acceptable when we have at our disposal, while 'reading for' it, episodes and details that serve as their signifiers.

Although psychocritics have perhaps taken too much for granted that their approach signals the overcoming of formalist narratology, they have made a convincing case for an approach

that accounts for narrative as dynamic, and this approach seems to be the appropriate framework in which the concept of myth can be renewed. Renewed it should be, by taking it *and* its object *à la lettre*, as discourse and as symptom.

Myth and Transference

The idea of myth in myth-critical discourse has the attraction of truth. Susan Langer, in a statement that is common to myth criticism, put it in a characteristic way: 'Myths are not bound to any particular words, nor even to language, but may be told or painted, acted or danced, *without suffering degradation or distortion*' (Langer 1953: 160; my emphasis). The overall negativity of this statement that describes myth by what it is not, obliterates the difference between the first and the second part of the sentence. Whereas we can agree on the first part, which detaches myths from a definite signifying system, the second part has to be rejected since it implies a positive signified which can suffer damage but can also remain undamaged. What Rahv described as the fear of history (Rahv 1966: 114) is in Langer's statement quite close to the fear of the signifier, and, indeed, historicity and discursivity are part of the same problem. The shifting signifier, inaccessible and versatile, is as frightening as is the presence of the subject of/in the myth. If meaning is unstable, it is because of the very split between the subject that tells the story about itself and the subject it tells about. The attraction of myth is that its universalism allows the concealment of this split. The split necessitates eternity, objectivity and universality in order to help the subject to get rid of time, space and itself. The idea of myth allows this illusion to be entertained.

If Langer thinks the change of signifying system does not 'distort' myths, it is because there is nothing that can be distorted. Thus conceived, myth cannot be defined but as an empty screen, a structure that appeals to the individual subject because of its pseudo-stability, which helps overcome the feeling of contingency.

In her contribution to an issue of *Poetics* on *Psychopoetics*, Jane Gallop (1984) differentiates a number of things relevant for our discussion. Commenting on Lacan's comment on Buffon's

statement 'le style, c'est l'homme même', Gallop insists on the difference between the spirit and the letter, as between the (American) Humanities and the (French) Letters; as between *man* and the *other* as the possible content of psychoanalysis; as, could we now add, between myth as pseudo-transhistorical content and myth as discourse. A concept of myth according to the 'Humanities' is to be replaced by a concept of myth according to the 'Letters'. Gallop's view is based on Felman's introduction to the special issue of *Yale French Studies* (1977), where the latter defines the relation between text and interpretation or between literary and scholarly texts for that matter, as non-hierarchical, both in time and in authority. Felman's brilliant practice of her own view in *Le scandale du corps parlant* (1980) shows not only the relevance of her idea but also the close relation between language and myth. Her analysis of the theories of speech-acts and the myth of Don Juan as the *mise en scène* of the paradigmatic speech-act of the promise is, indeed, most promising.

Transference is the key-word in Gallop's account of Felman's point. Interpretation is always an exercise of power; transference is the structuration of the authority relation; to analyse transference is to unmask that structuration, to interrupt its efficient operation (Gallop 1984: 305-306). Analysing the relation of transference displaces the position of the patient from the text onto the critic reader, and interpretation becomes, then, self-criticism. The text does not become the analyst—neither does, in transference, the analyst—but it occupies, at times, the place of the empty screen, *place tout court*. At other times it occupies the other position with which the first is constantly in dialectic exchange: that of the transferring, projecting patient. Since texts are always also responses to other texts, they cannot but share with the critic/reader the same relation of transference, from which the reader/critic cannot separate him/herself.

The relation between myth and literature is as problematic as the one between phantasy and primal phantasy. On the one hand, myth is a subcategory of literature; on the other hand, it is a more general form of it—Langer *dixit*. If we agree with Lévi-Strauss (1963b) that a myth consists of all its versions, we should take the statement to its consequence: there is no myth

'underneath' these versions, there is no myth other than each version, each representation, just as, as we shall see, there is no primal phantasy less personal and less narrative than any other phantasy. The difference between myth and literary texts, like that between primal and other phantasies, is to be situated on the level of the transferring subject and its relation to it. The *illusion* of the stable signified allows the user of a myth to project more freely on the screen. But what she/he takes to be a signified, functions as a signifier: a material support borrowed from language—a *letter*. It has no meaning, but it supports meaning, providing the subject's projection with a means to get rid of its subjectivity and thereby grant subjective projections universal status. Therein lies the *interest* in the Habermasian sense of both myth and myth criticism for subjects of sorts (Habermas 1972), including psychocritics.

In the following pages the discourse on myth and the discourse of myth will be analysed as if they were the same discourse. I will expose my reactions to five discursive units, each with a different relation to myth: the scholarly discourse of psychoanalysis on myth; Freud's own mythical discourse; a modern novel by Thomas Mann with explicit myth-critical intentions, in interaction with a text that Mann and many others have used as source-myth, Genesis 39; and Rembrandt's etching, presumably also based on Genesis 39. The hypothesis of transference and the non-mastery it implies frees the theoretical text from the constraints its status places upon it. If anything, it becomes, through that analysis, more interesting—more lively, literary, narrative. Through this analysis I will slowly and dialectically elaborate my point. That point is that such a dynamic and literary comment can provide a more explicative account of the mythical process than the current approaches can ever lead to.

Myth and Psychoanalytic Discourse

'Myth' is not a psychoanalytic term. Although the word occurs frequently in psychoanalytic publications, it is never explicitly defined for its own sake. There is no entry on myth in that paradigmatic sample of psychoanalytic discourse, Laplanche

and Pontalis's *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (1980). The features it has when used self-evidently relate it axiomatically to concepts like phantasy. With the latter, it shares connotations of subjectivity, that is of untruth and personal input, projection, identification and the like. At the same time, it has relations, via its universal character, with the more specific concept of *primal* phantasy, with which it then shares connotations of original truth, phylogenesis, transhistoricity and the collective unconscious.

The Freudian concepts of phantasy and primal phantasy as defined in Laplanche and Pontalis's dictionary have, however, perhaps less in common than in contrast. It is in the space left by the tension between these two basic psychoanalytic concepts that the status of the concept of myth as written and unwritten, signified but not defined, can be situated. Between writing and discourse, implicit concepts have no *letter*; they have no such 'essentially localised structure of the signifier' as Lacan defines the letter in his major essay on the letter in which he advises us to take Freudian concepts *à la lettre* (Lacan 1966: 259). The concept of *myth*, indeed, has no such letter, in that it has no place in Laplanche and Pontalis's alphabetically ordered series of letters, of concepts placed by letter. On the other hand, it does have letters in the sense of 'material supports which the concrete discourse borrows from language' (Lacan 1966: 254), since its signifiers of sorts haunt the analytic text. The conspicuous discursive *lack* in a dictionary, a text which is based on the all-importance of the *definition* as the beginning of discourse on the concept, is symptomatic. The very concept whose use is based on the assumption of universality has no such beginning in the scholarly text. This double absence, then, becomes the *letter* of the concept, its material support by antithesis, its primal signifier. We do not need to take this signifier as referring *only* to its place in the field of the concept that has no origin. It does point, at the same time, to an absence, not of origin but of articulation, hence it is dissolved in related concepts that adopt it. In order to articulate it, then, we must give it a beginning, borrowed from the language of these related concepts.

The following definitions constitute the first piece of discourse to be analysed:

> *Phantasy*: Imaginary *scene* in which the subject is a *protagonist*, representing the fulfilment of a wish (in the last analysis, an unconscious wish) in a manner that is *distorted* to a greater or lesser extent by defensive processes (Laplanche and Pontalis 1980: 314; my emphasis).
>
> *Primal phantasy*: *Typical* phantasy *structures* (intra-uterine existence, primal scene, castration, seduction) which psychoanalysis *reveals* to be responsible for the *organisation* of *phantasy life, regardless* of the *personal experience* of different subjects; according to Freud, the *universality* of these phantasies is *explained* by the *fact* that they constitute a phylogenetically transmitted *inheritance* (p. 331; my emphasis).

Being a narratologist and, for unknown reasons, fond of logical thinking, my reactions to these definitions are the following. The two concepts stand in a relation of specification, hence of implication. Logically, the definition of the first, more general term, 'phantasy', holds also for the second, which is one of its specifications. Surprisingly, the two definitions are both different and to some extent mutually exclusive.

The definition of phantasy has the narratological notions of scene, protagonist and subject. The latter term refers to the split, typical of any autobiographical discourse, between the subject *of* and *in* the phantasy. This eccentricity phantasy shares with both language and representation. It is particularly acute in so-called first-person narrative, but equally, via the concept of projection and that of phantasy itself, in all narrative. Narrative is even *the* type of discourse where *différance* is generally thematized—a feature which allows conceptual reversals like Brooks's junction of 'the narrative of desire' and 'the desire of narrative' (Brooks 1984b: 37). The double teleology implied in the phrase 'representing the fulfilment of a wish' enhances the new narratology flavour of the definition: both representation and wish coincide in a satisfactory ending. The term 'scene' implies both a plot and its staging, its *mise en scène*. 'Imaginary' and 'distorted' enhance the fictional status of the scene, which makes it still more narrative, in the sense that, in English, narrative and fiction are synonymical expressions (Rimmon-Kenan 1983). Note that the distortion, according to syntax, refers to the *manner* of representation, not to the wish or its fulfilment. In

other words, the agent of distortion is the focalizor, not the protagonist.

The definition of 'primal phantasy' is quite different in tone. Its beginning is much more static and metalinguistic. If phantasy is a scene, primal phantasy is its structure; if phantasy is literary discourse, primal phantasy is critical discourse. More importantly, the subject, enhanced in the first definition, is disposed of in the second one. The primal phantasy is described in a positivistic discourse which is characterized by the attempt to do away with subjectivity at the cost of personification: primal phantasy is 'responsible' for something that happens to the life of the subject, but 'regardless' of the latter's experience. In terms of the first definition, we could venture that the definition, here, reveals an attempt to get rid of the double subject by elimination of the focalizor who, as the subject of experience, would be capable of bridging the gap between the subject of the unconscious discourse—the scene—and the protagonist. The universality implied in this separation between phantasy and subject, between scene and representation—including distortion—is not argued, not even stated, but *explained*. Its existence, its truth, is taken for granted by the assertion that it is in need of explanation—which indeed it is, but on a different, conceptual level.

Narrativity comes in focus at the end of the definition, precisely when the explanation is given. Hence, narrativity receives an altogether different place here. The phrase 'phylogenetically transmitted inheritance' introduces a plot, a dynamic aspect, and two fallacies. The first one consists of the so-called 'third-person narrative', which is the very attempt to get rid of the split between subject and protagonist by eliminating the former, thus breaking with the latter, who becomes the 'third person', radically inaccessible; the word 'fact' symptomizes this *objective fallacy* that implies attitudes close to positivism, objectivism and mythical thinking as it is displayed by myth criticism itself. The second fallacy is the *narrative fallacy* that consists of replacing explanation with story. These two fallacies are needed in order to fit the second definition within the first, while they are not consistent as a set. If phantasy is a *distorted manner of representation of a wish fulfilment*, each

embedded verb implying an agent/subject, how can one of its sub-types be universal? If the one is a scene, so must be the other; if the one requires a subject as its discursive agent, how can the other be 'inherited'? The answer provided by the two fallacies is that it can only be on the level of representation, *in casu*, through the idea of primal phantasy itself. That is why narrativity, in the second definition, came in on the meta-narrative level.

We now come to grasp why 'myth' needs no definition—indeed, cannot afford definition. It is because it is the paradox itself in which the Freudian argument is caught which tries to explain *structures by stories*, or to use Thomas Pavel's terms, to replace *articulation* with *origin* (Pavel 1984), and the inherent subjectivity with the pseudo-objectivity of the 'scientific myth' of phylogenetic explanation/beginning. The replacement of (logical) articulation by (non-falsifiable) origin is an attempt to impose, on notions that are alien to it, a family structure. Ideas, phantasies, get a father and become *sons*.

The conflict between universalism and historicity is thus *staged* (*mise en scène*) in this 'explanation': the utmost universality *is*, in this view, the utmost historicality, via the implicit argument that assumes that the further removed from the present, the older, the truer the story is and the more general its range of application. Within this light of thought origin counters, replaces articulation. This is exactly how mythical thinking functions. The basic message of myths in this thought is: what *I* think (phantasies, wishfully distorted) *is* the truth *because* it has always been so. The authority of age becomes the historical projection of the unwillingness to assume the historicality of the *I*'s wishes.

Freud's Story of the Sons

In this respect, there is no more revealing myth, no better case of a primal phantasy *and* of an autobiographical statement, hence no more convincing case of the site of the concept of myth in the space between the phantasy and the primal phantasy of Laplanche and Pontalis's dictionary, than the evocation of the primitive horde and the murder of the father in *Totem and*

Taboo (Freud 1946 [1914]; see Appendix 1 at the end of this essay). The discourse that generates this myth has conspicuous features of both definitions I have analysed above. On the one hand, the myth is veiled by scientific discourse. The subject of the phantasy is hiding behind predecessors, anthropologists who came up with the idea of a primitive patriarchal horde. But this disclaimer of subjectivity is countered by the claim to originality when Freud corrects and extends the view of the authority, thus assuming subjectivity.

The conflict is *mise en abyme* in the opening sentence of the personal version which is at the same time the outcome, catastrophe and *end* of the whole myth. Freud intervenes with his magic explanation only at the end, when the authority of the predecessor must be replaced with his own. Significantly, the sentence which reveals the origin and truth is surprisingly short. It is provided with an enigmatic footnote: 'One day the expelled brothers joined forces, slew and ate the father, and thus put an end to the father horde' (Freud 1946: 183). The passage ends with another footnote referring to another authority whose account of the *same act* is quoted. The difference between Freud's and Atkinson's account is a temporal aspect: whereas Atkinson represents it as a durative act ('combined attacks, renewed again and again'), Freud's contribution to the discussion amounts to the turning of this durative act into a *singular event*. No wonder he uses the fairy-tale convention of 'one day' whereas, at the same time, trying to avoid the 'erroneous impression which this exposition may call forth by taking into consideration the concluding sentence of the subsequent chapter'.

There is, again, ambiguity in the use of the spiritual paternity. Freud claims *and* disclaims for this story, which is his most crazy, most creative phantasy, the authority of storytellers like Darwin and Fraser. This was meant to be the most universal story, but in fact it is the most personal one Freud has ever 'revealed'. His use of sources completes the picture. Darwin and Fraser, and Atkinson for that matter, have in common the contamination of their discourse (as quoted by Freud) by their object of study, and the confusion of historical and analogical reasoning. The discursive devices used in this passage—and in

the whole book—are borrowed not only from the convention of the fairy tale but also from that of the eighteenth-century fictional novel, where the device of claiming reliable sources has come to signify fictionality.

Indeed, the chapter opens with a sentence that stages the focalizor whose position Freud wants his readers to share: '*Let us* now *envisage* the *scene* of such a totem meal and *let us embellish* it further with a few probable features which could not be adequately considered before' (p. 181; my emphases). The sentence displays discursive features that embed the definition of the primal phantasy into that of phantasy in general. The plural *and* first-person subject ('us') transfers onto the first definition discussed above the universality of the second, a move that reconciles it with the first definition's basic subjectivity. Invited to partake in the feast, we become protagonists of the scene *and* focalizors capable of embellishing it according to our personal needs, and hence capable of introducing 'distortions' in the manner of representation. Freud's discourse of this founding myth of the origin of all the myths he is interested in becomes the paradigmatic case of mythical discourse, where phantasy and primal phantasy come together in a pseudo-historical escape from history. Utterly mythical and utterly personal, Freud's father murder scene becomes the myth of myth: *myth-en-abyme*.

Mann's Myth versus Man's Myth

The relation, or the distinction, between myth and myth criticism can be clarified by an examination of the case of Thomas Mann. Thomas Mann's explicit claim that he has attempted to humanize Potiphar's wife in his novel amounts to a disclaimer. His polemic against the tradition that condemns the woman in the story of Genesis 39 and, through the typically mythical universalistic twist, women in general, is also a reaction to the function of transference implied in the myth. 'Re'-writing a myth is compulsory transference. As Mann complained, the biblical meagre 'what' was lacking the 'how' and the 'why': life's circumstantiality was missing (see Yohannan 1982: 431). But this complaint would seem ill-grounded if we take the biblical account at its letter. The proportion between 'life's circumstan-

tiality' and the 'factual' *event* is as unequal as in Mann's novel itself. The chapter in Genesis is characterized in the first place by the amount of circumstantial clauses that literally circumscribe the event which is, after a long preparation, presented in a few single sentences. The dialectic between the singular and the durative that we have seen at work in the Freudian mythical text is overwhelmed, enclosed, by a predominance of speech events. The latter, as opposed to the former, are not durative but repetitive, narratologically in that they are narrated several times while they occur several times; stylistically in that the declarative verb is repeated in each case, a feature typical of biblical Hebrew but nevertheless functional here in a more specific sense as well.

If Mann reacts to the missing circumstantiality in the Genesis text, then is this not because of a specific aspect of 'life', the one he explicitly claims to be interested in, the woman's subjectivity that is? Indeed, juxtaposing her to the men, to Joseph and to her '*pro forma* husband', Mann transposes a preoccupation of his own onto the screen provided by the biblical story. From the very beginning of this exceedingly long novel, Joseph is presented as a sexually ambivalent character. The first scene represents him daydreaming at night, phantasizing in the moonlight: 'a youth famed for his charm and charming especially by right from his mother, who had been sweet and lovely like the moon when it is full and like Ishtar's star when it swims mildly in the clear sky' (Mann 1984: 4). We do not need to guess whether the sometimes explicit femininity of Joseph is Mann's response to the phrase 'and he was beautiful of appearance and beautiful of face' (Gen. 39.6); Mann extensively discusses his view that the relation between beauty and femininity is a subjective association confirmed by intersubjective agreement: 'Joseph, moreover, as he *knew himself*, and as *everybody told him*, was both beautiful and well-favoured—a condition which *certainly* embraces a *consciousness* of femininity' (p. 48; my emphases). The episode with Potiphar's wife is, as Mann claims, an integrated part of Joseph's life, and therefore there is no limit to the projection of features of the ambiguous youth whose status as the 'true son of Jacob' is defined by his very ambiguity, by being an exceedingly attractive

man confronting desire in and *as* the other.

Wherever Mann is polemically or otherwise *discussing* the mythical traditions—the Greek, the Arabic, as well as the Hebrew texts[1] that represent the screen—he is not *transferring* onto it but deconstructing the transferences displayed by others. There is no point, then, in taking the entire episode, as it is represented in the novel, as another myth. Much of it amounts to myth criticism. But Mann cannot escape the mythical dynamics which he tries to undo by replacing it with his conscious preoccupations. He represents an excessively narcissistic Joseph, guilty of *hubris*, too confident in his capacity to defend his somewhat unmotivated chastity. The strangest feature of this character seems to me to be the fact that he loses his charms as soon as he is socially accomplished. Once viceroy of Egypt he becomes fat, physically middle-aged, pleased with himself, sure of his power. Something must have gone wrong in between. Indeed, he has lost his ambiguity and the double attraction it guaranteed. Not only did all women desire him but all men as well, including the 'jealous creator and lord, insistent upon sole possession' to whom Joseph's chastity is due. What made the young Joseph so very special was his status as the 'true son', who was identified with his mother and hence the unique love object of his father. The competition between father and mother, male and female lovers who struggle for the possession of his beauty, is won by the father or, rather, is given up to the fatherly position. Joseph's story ends when he loses his sonship. He stops being loved by the father when he becomes one himself.

Arguing against the universalistic fallacy of myth criticism that leads to hatred against women in love, Mann makes his Joseph represent an attempt at a different kind of universality: that which arises when the limits between subjects are suspended. The general recognition of his lovability questions the limits between the self and the others. Being man and woman, loved by men and women, he becomes the screen onto which the other characters project their most problematic feelings. The most characteristic scene is the generalized defloration scene (see Appendix 2) that takes place before the famous bed

1. See Bach's article in this volume.

scene. It represents a case of the junction of artistic and ideological quality. In this talkative text the character of the woman lacks words. Mut-em-enet is pressed by her female friends to tell them why she is so unhappy and sick. Unable to speak, in answer to this request, she gives a party. At dessert, oranges and very sharp little knives are distributed. And when the ladies are peeling their oranges, Osarsiph/Joseph comes in to serve wine. Sheer fright at the sight of such beauty makes all the women cut their fingers, some of them to the bone. 'My loves, what ever has happened to you all? What are you doing? Your blood is flowing', is the reaction of the plotting lovesick virgin. Her exclamatory tone, insincere as it was meant to be, receives sincerity from the contiguous comment. For the narrator continues: 'It was a fearful sight' (Mann 1984: 803). Mut-em-enet planned this event with the explicit purpose of making herself understood. She wants her friends to *understand* her love at the very same moment they *know* it; the difference is identification. Where words fail, understanding is only possible through the suspension of subjective limits. They all have to *feel* her love, so that it becomes theirs. Thus the split created by discourse is cured. There is no longer a narrative, a 'third person', an object of gossip.

This strategy fits well with Mann's attempt to humanize the woman by generalizing not her crime but her feelings; by transgressing the denial of female subjectivity. But at the same time discursive signifiers produce emotional overtones that symptomize a less explicit truth. Mut expresses her surprise at what *happens*: their blood is flowing. And the narrator partakes in the effect of the event: 'it was a fearful sight'. The moon nun not only desires sexual initiation, she also fears it. Identification with the female man made the perspective less frightening, but Joseph's refusal was a refusal of that identification. The general defloration he is innocently guilty of is another way of going through the frightful event. This rehearsal for the accusation to Potiphar has, just like the latter, the same aspect of intersubjectivity, of lack of limits between subjects, which is so central in Mann's novel. It enhances and explains the crucial scene.

This aspect of the novel—and many others—are not at all related to the Genesis story. There is no way whatsoever to

claim that this text is a 'version' of the 'universal story'. Whereas the latter derives its meaning from the very absence of female subjectivity—the woman acts, but does not focalize—the scene in Mann's novel stages a dramatic generalization of the woman's ambivalent fears. Although he is not explicitly polemic here, I would suggest that Mann's desire to use the Hebrew myth of the Jew in a foreign country, confronted with a foreigner in love with him, for this intense dramatization of emotional community, could only arise from his personal response to the historical moment. While rising Nazism, within a neurotic ideology of maleness, started to make the limits between groups of subjects so absolute as to become those between life and death, the ambivalence, both sexual and ethnic, of the encounter between two ambivalent subjects became an acutely necessary alternative.

In the biblical story the woman obviously functions as a motivator of something else. The text is structured around three notions: talk, possession and the house. The first one is worked out by Mann, the second is not at all central in the novel, while the third is only relevant as setting. The repetition in the Genesis story, of the filling of Joseph's hand with all it can possibly contain, is a business of men. Joseph's reluctance to transgress is, therefore, an acceptance of the fathers above him. In Mann's novel the father-God does claim his abstinence, but for a more indirect reason involving sexual jealousy and opposing Joseph's narcissistic lack of realism. The *house* of Genesis is the site of power *and* of bondage. Joseph goes to and fro between inside and outside; the house represents danger whereas the outside is of no help; Potiphar returns to the house from which he had to be absent earlier. The whole structure which the repetition of the word generates is *not* used by Mann. Mann's myth is not the myth of the young man. Stressing the woman's position and its identity with Joseph's, he questions the very distinction between the sexes. He uses the story of the son in order to tell the story of the daughter, while making subjective identity futile. Thus he introduces as his major theme an aspect absent from the biblical story.

In Genesis the house is the mediating signifier between the two relationships in which Joseph is involved. From his

deliverance from the mother's womb to his ascension to worldly power and possessions the transition is signified, by condensation, in this recurring word. But it is not *his* house and what happened is not his doing; the words that narrate it over and over again are not his words. Quite to the contrary, Mann's Joseph needs no house and talks enough, too much even. At one point he decides not to talk, but then he acts instead, if negatively. When on his way to Egypt he has an opportunity to send a message to his father. He prefers not to do it. He is so sure of his own power that he accomplishes the very act of arrogance: he prematurely breaks with his father, with his son position, only to become a son again. The analysis of speech-acts and other acts in both stories show how deeply the two accounts differ. Mann's decision to attack, to diverge from what he takes to be his model, shows the function of the mythical screen: Mann *acts upon it* and cannot help acting beyond his plans.

Rembrandt's Myth: Jumping to Conclusions

If we can follow, through Mann's own statements, his polemical attitude towards the traditions where he found his mythical screen, in the case of Rembrandt we have no such evidence. Quite to the contrary, we must assume that the painter had no conscious wish to deviate from the myth. In many of his works Rembrandt represents biblical subjects, and although the choice of topics is doubtlessly significant, there is no way to challenge his faith in the Holy Writ. Yet his representation of Joseph and Potiphar's wife (Figure 1)—a subject he took up again in at least two later paintings—is not generally included among his biblical subjects but treated, rather, as a nude (White 1969) or as an eroticum (Ostermann n.d.). This ambiguity in the reception of his little etching of the scene gives no information whatsoever on the artists's stance, and that is so much the better for our discussion. For I have ventured that a myth is a screen for transference. In spite of our good luck in the Mann case we must, then, accept that in general there is no way we can distinguish between the transference of the artist on the screen provided, say, by the biblical story and, on the other hand, the transference of the semiotician desperately trying to argue

Figure 1: Rembrandt, *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife* (1634, Haarlem, Teyler's Museum).

against the stability of myth. But fortunately transference is a dynamic relation, and it is that dynamic that I want to point out now.

If I try to identify the screen in Rembrandt's etching—the empty space onto which I can transfer my phantasies—I come to the conclusion that it consists of, on the one hand, the title and what *I* know of the stories and traditions that title evokes; on the other hand, it consists of three aspects of the image itself: the body, the composition and the position of the spectator. The body of the woman is twisted: the upper part is turned towards Joseph, the lower part is turned away from him towards the lower part of the image. The composition has a specific relation between vertical and diagonal lines. That structure is represented in Figure 2a. Some of these lines are straight, some are curved, as in Figure 2b. The straight line at the bottom right is dominating as a line. The top left vertical is very slight, while the curved lines are less striking as lines. There is a double

spectator position. The external view is directed from the outside into the image. The play of dark and light, characteristic of Rembrandt's work, direct it from the bottom right to the middle/top left (Figure 2c). Reaching the thematic centre of the etching, Joseph's head, it reaches the internal diegetic spectator position: Joseph's eyes. These look back, although it is unclear in which direction they are turned exactly. Do they look at the body of the woman or at the vertical object where the external spectator position has entered the image? The ambiguity is represented in Figure 2d, where both positions meet.

If I take this minimal description as the screen for my own mythical transference, I feel justified firstly by its perceptible status and, secondly, by descriptions given by Rembrandt critics (e.g. White 1969: 36) which do not lead to the same type of interpretations. Mythical labour starts when the title of the work meets the work as screen in the spectator's projection of phantasies. The title, then, functions as a shifter, producing an *Aha-Erlebnis*, which *seems* to be triggered by the representation but is in fact an utterly personal reaction to it.

My response to this etching is inevitably a narratological one. The concept of *focalization*, which has a quite elaborate and specific bearing on the analysis of narrative discourse, can be transposed to some extent onto the analysis of the visual images. This, however, should be done with care. I retain the following features of the concept (for an extensive account of it in language, see Bal 1985a):

1. In narrative discourse focalization is the direct *content* of the linguistic signifiers. Here, it is the direct content of visual signifiers like lines, light and dark, composition. Hence, it is already an interpretation.
2. In narrative there is an external focalizor which can, from time to time, *embed* an internal, diegetic one. The relation of embedding is crucial. Here the same distinction holds. The external focalizor, with whose view the spectator is asked to identify but from which the latter is technically distinguished, *embeds* the internal one, the Joseph focalizor. Hence, they do not *meet* on the same level.

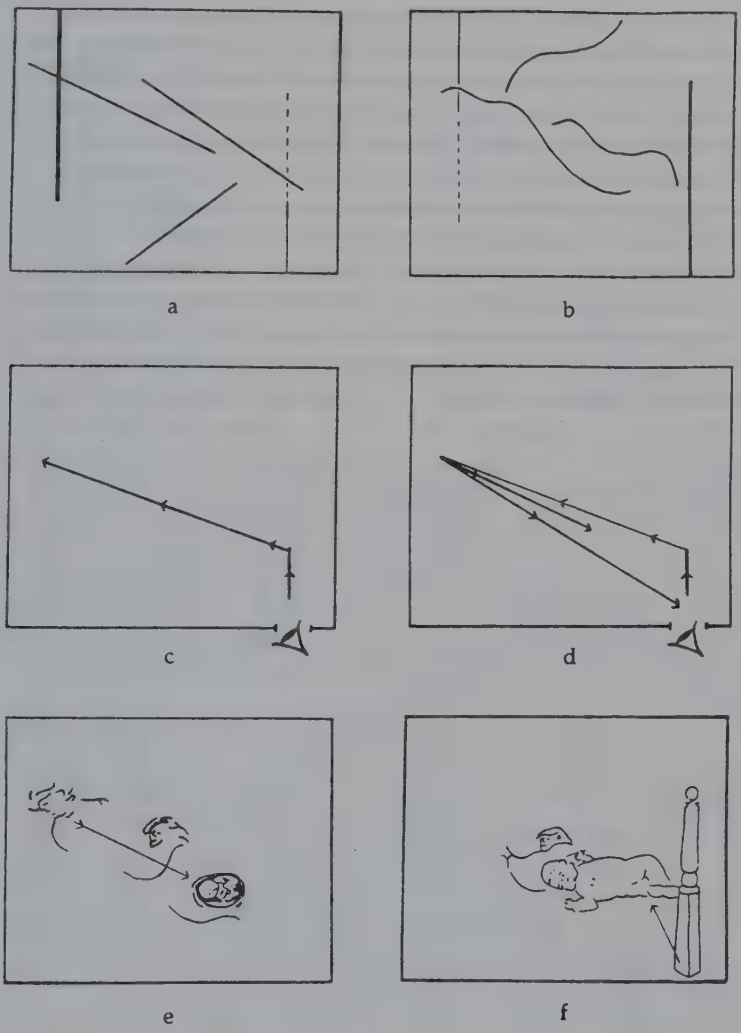

Figure 2: Structure of Rembrandt's *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife*

3. In narrative the fabula or diegesis is considered to be *mediated*, or even produced, by the focalizors. Similarly, in the case of visual art, the use of the concept implies the claim that the *event* represented has the status of the focalized object produced by focalizors. In the case of a diegetic focalizor (here, Joseph) the 'reality' status of the different objects painted is variable.
4. As a consequence of the last point, the same object or event can receive different interpretations according to different focalizors. Here there can arise ambiguity for the same reasons.
5. In narrative discourse the identification of the external focalizor with an internal one can produce a discursive conflation called Free Indirect Discourse. The identification between the external focalizor in visual images with an internal focalizor can similarly give rise to such a conflation.

Nevertheless, there remain differences between visual and discursive narratives. One obvious difference is the relation to time, which makes it possible to see the work of art as a whole, to view all its parts simultaneously. However, I claim that, as soon as one regards a visual work as a narrative stimulated by its representation, its title or whatever features that suggest narrativity, the basic attitude of the spectator is narratological, that is dynamic rather than static.

I start from what I think is the beginning, from the external spectator position. Entering the image from the bottom right-hand corner, I stress the diagonal line; hence the woman turns away from me, while I see her sexual parts first. I follow this line as far as Joseph's face and, 'Free Indirect Discursively', look back with him. Now I see the woman's protruding, fat belly; meanwhile I also see the vertical part of the bedstead. Arriving thus at the beginning, I cannot but go back again and I get involved in a to-and-fro movement which makes me aware of the doubleness of my view. I cannot but alternate the external focalization with the internal one, identifying with the outside onlooker and with Joseph, but never at the same time. This is consistent with the technical, logical description of ambiguity

(Rimmon 1977; Perry and Sternberg 1968; Gombrich 1968). Ambiguity becomes the leading principle in my reading of the etching, used as I am to considering it as an artistic device.

The two focalizor positions can be analysed more closely. The ambiguity is different from the famous rabbit-or-duck case in that the principle of embedding is at work here. The hierarchy between the external focalizor and the internal one must be accounted for. There is no direct eye contact between Joseph and the spectator. In other words, we cannot meet Joseph's eyes directly. We see his eyes; he does not see ours. The external focalizor is by definition absent from the image. He is a voyeur. Entering at the bottom of the vertical object, it becomes easy to identify the position with that object. The latter's contiguity with the outside, its ending at the very edge of the image makes it a suitable candidate for the function of mediator. This mediation produces a case of Free Indirect Discourse. Its strong presence *as* vertical, as opposed to the weak lines of the other vertical object—the door at the other side—suggest to me that I take it as contiguous, too, to another space: the psychoanalytic frame of reference. I can hardly avoid associating it with a phallus. More specifically, it comes to stand as a symbol of both the outsider position and the sceptre that in its turn signifies power in general and the power inherent to the position of the voyeur. The object represents the outside viewer *in absentia*. But then that position becomes gender-specific: the voyeur becomes a man who looks right into the woman's sexual parts.

The function of signifying the absent can be combined with the inside focalizor's position. Indeed, there is one conspicuous absence in the image, signified in its title which states the absent's presence: Potiphar. The outside focalizor becomes, now, a motivator. Potiphar's absence is required for the first part of the event to take place, while his presence, within the mind of both characters, is required for the second part of the event. The insistence in the biblical text on this double status of the man in the closed space of the house, which gets lost in the King James translation, has been preserved in the Dutch *Statenvertaling* of 1618 and 1619. I have tried to enhance the meeting places of the Hebrew text and this Dutch translation in the working translation (Appendix 3). The historical specificity

of Rembrandt's Joseph can be related, among many other things, to the polemical background of this very literal translation that was a political act against Catholicism. I would venture the conjecture that Rembrandt used this discursive particularity as part of his screen (compare both translations of v. 11, for example).

Joseph's ambiguous eyes gain their meaning from the phallic object's mediating position between inside and outside. He reacts to the woman—with attraction and repulsion—*and* he reacts to the object: the father, the fatherly position, the outside position. Voyeurism is characterized by non-communication; the attraction of the position is its safety; looking without being looked at, *jouïr sans l'autre*. The fatherly position is the position of legal rights, of having-done-it. The father sets the rules, possesses the woman, excludes the son from sex with her. And it is the position which belongs to a different *time*, the elder generation to which the son does not belong. Combining these two aspects of the position, we can say that Joseph is confronted with the witness of the scene, a witness which is the internalized law that forbids him to do what, on the other hand, he seems to be doing: seeing the naked body of the father's wife.

Perhaps he is doing more. When we follow the ambiguity as a signifier further, he seems to be grappling at the body. For his whole body—his hands, his eyes, his head and his feet—are all equally ambiguous. The head is turned away, already reaching the door of escape, but the eyes turn back, looking at the woman *and* at the father, and the hands push away *and* grapple. The reader who is not convinced of the latter conjecture is invited to follow, with a pencil, the line of the 'fold of the garment' the woman holds. This *is* a rabbit-or-duck case. Technically, the woman's hand does hold a fold of the garment. But given the firmness of her grip, should there not be, then, small folds right under her hand? The absence of these folds, although not at all conspicuous, does allow the rabbit to become a duck, for the object the hand holds, then, is hard, no less than the bedstead. While the woman is already grasping the garment for betrayal, the boy is still tempted, phantasizing an event that is ambiguous in its turn: as the passive object of sex, he would both enjoy it and be innocent.

The ambiguity of Joseph's feet frames that of the fold within a 'story of the son'. One foot turns away from the scene, the other points towards it. But what exactly does it point to? To the bottom of the vertical object. In other words, to the aspect of the phallic object which brings together the inside and the outside, the aspects of voyeurism and legitimacy. At this point I am going to jump to conclusions. Joseph's attitude is that of an athlete ready to jump. Again, a technical feature which is not conspicuous but nevertheless telling allows this interpretation. Physically speaking, Joseph's weight rests on the wrong leg. If he wants to go away, in the direction of the door, he should rest on his other leg, since then the woman would pull him back. Why does he not flee in that direction? The door is closed, the house is a *closed-house* as the Hebrew word for prison indicates. There is only escape, for Rembrandt's Joseph, at the other side. The character is preparing to jump from the son position to the father position.

In order to clarify this I go back to the ambiguity of the image as a whole, which started at the doubleness of the focalization. Identifying with the fatherly position, the spectator is committed to seeing what the peeping father/woman owner sees. The structure of embedding receives its relevance here. *Within* this view, we look with Joseph and notice with fright that the latter *seems* to shrink back from the transgression, but in fact *is* attracted by the perspective. Identifying with the son, the father sees the *other side* of the fold in the garment. Paradoxically, the father's fright can only be understood *and* felt when the outside enters into the image and identifies, through him, with Joseph. In a different medium, and for a different effect, Rembrandt is using the same device as Thomas Mann in the scene with the little knives. In that case, however, we should wonder what the transference is after, what the problem is that the character focalizor can only bear when shared with others.

The father looks at the sexual parts of the body; the boy only sees the belly. That belly is fat, ostensively so, and Rembrandt's contemporaries criticized him for it (Emmens 1979). In combination with the status of the focalizor who watches and interprets it, the protruding feature of the belly may be associated with pregnancy (Figure 2e). On the other hand, in combination with the other focalizor, the hairless vagina, the

short, fat thighs and the position of the left leg connote a baby (Figure 2f). The meaning of these two different, even contradictory, interpretations of the same body depends on the focalizors. The young boy sees a mother, a woman of the elder generation who, as a primary love object, attracts him but who, as belonging to the father, is inaccessible to him. He rejects, if ambiguously, the perspective of being undressed by this naked woman—for that would be both a regression and a transgression. The father, in his direct focalization, sees a baby girl: a female of the younger generation. In his view, she belongs to Joseph's category: in his frightened phantasy she cannot be but attracted by the handsome youth. The father's anxious jealousy and the son's fear of initiation are represented by the ambiguous structure of focalization of the strangely twisted body that blocks both men's sight.

What about the leap, then? Jumping is skipping. Going to and fro between the two starting points of the readings of the image the spectator, just like the two focalizors, has been skipping, jumping over, the em-bedded body of the woman. And that is exactly what the two focalizors are concerned with. They are dealing with each other. The father is afraid of the competition with the son, expressed in the childish view of the woman which identifies her with the younger generation, the other side. The son is afraid of the interdiction of the father to compete with him, to gain access to his domain, but he is equally afraid of winning and of losing that competition. Between him and the fatherly position there is the body of the woman: an obstacle in terms of space; initiation in terms of time. What Joseph as an image-internal, hence limited, focalizor cannot know, is that once on the other side, the right side of the image or the right side *tout court*, Joseph will have to assume, with the fatherly position, its ambiguous looking back at the competing son, and then the whole story begins again.

The em-bedding position is decisive. In spite of the competing vertical 'fold'—still hidden in ambiguity—it is the thing at the bottom right that clearly has won the competition between the two vertical objects. It is doubly opposed to the door at the upper left. It is, if we may say so, discursively stronger. The door is closed, whereas the sceptre is already *in* the woman's space,

delimited by the curtain, and *outside*, at the exit it disposes of and guards. The door is not a viable exit. There is no spectator position at the top-left-outside: there is no way to turn back, for time moves on and sons become fathers.

Conclusions

If, for simplicity's sake, we assume that both Mann and Rembrandt used the biblical story of Genesis 39 as a screen, it is obvious that they both have aspects in common with the source myth and nothing, or hardly anything, with each other. On the other hand, they both leave aside several aspects of the Genesis story, which is in its turn doubtlessly very different from its own screen. Thirdly, both Mann and Rembrandt focus on aspects *not* present in Genesis. Fourthly, while Mann shares with Laplanche and Pontalis's definitions a challenge of the distinction between the subjective and the intersubjective, the defloration scene stages that challenge 'horizontally', in a scenic articulation, whereas Laplanche and Pontalis try to obliterate the distinction in a 'vertical' perspective of origin. Freud's myth is in no way related to the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife; rather, it represents the struggle between positivism and phantasy. However, the problems of the relations between father and son seem to be connected with the relation between positivism and phantasy; for as we have seen, Freud's text shares with Rembrandt's etching a double-levelled representation of the competition between fathers and sons in the fabula and in the discourse that represents it.

My point is not that each occurrence of a mythical signifier is different, for that is commonplace. I have tried to argue that the relation between a mythical unit and its so-called versions is not a relation of interpretation but a relation of transference. Such a relation is dynamic, historically specific and discursive. As a consequence of this first point, a mythical unit is not a unit of meaning but a signifying structure. And it can be, thanks to the fact that the opposite seems to be the case. We are used to referring to myths in terms of what we take to be a summary of their contents. But it is the action imposed onto the myth that *is* the myth. The summary, then, becomes an empty signifier which

triggers other signifiers, and the mythical discourse comes into being. In Peircean terms, we can say that an indexical relation between the screen and the myth becomes possible on the basis of the *illusion* of an iconic relation, on whose basis the producer of the new myth thinks she/he can establish an indexical relation, like Mann's polemic response. Mythical thinking, which consists of that illusion and the adoption of the universalistic fallacy, is at work in the very discourses which attempt to critically analyse it: myth criticism and psychoanalysis. If you think that in my discussion of Rembrandt's etching I have not been able to avoid projecting onto it my own subjective preoccupations, entailed both by my experience of the jealous father-woman owner, and of the position of being skipped, and by my feminist position, you get my point.

Afterword

This essay was written at an odd moment. Having been made to feel guilty about stopping at the Hebrew Bible for so much longer than any excuse justifies, I had vaguely decided to change directions in my work and return to my old field (French and literary theory), yet did not know what to undertake, when I was asked to apply to the Harvard program in Women's Studies in Religion, and then was accepted. Right before my departure to the United States I was invited to give a paper in Jerusalem on discourse in psychoanalysis, and for obvious reasons I did not want to do it on the Bible. At a loss to find a subject, I came upon the Rembrandt etching of Joseph and Potiphar's wife, and I had my topic. Little did I know that this was going to be another adventure of five years, just like my excursion to the Bible.

Since then I have worked extensively on Rembrandt or, rather, on the relations between verbal and visual arts. I wrote *Reading 'Rembrandt'*, and although there have been periods of overlap—after all, I wrote *Death and Dissymmetry* after writing 'Myth'—my interest has gone increasingly to visual art. Since 'Myth' was the first essay in that vein, it has been substantially revised since then, and what remains of it is now a part of a much longer chapter in the *Rembrandt* book. The changes, however, are related to theorizing visual narrative,

rather than to the interpretation of Genesis 39. That is why I have agreed that the original version, written in 1985, be included in this volume.

It may seem slightly out of place, nevertheless, in a volume of biblical interpretations, for it offers an interpretation of four texts, only one of which is biblical. The others are widely varied: a visual text, the etching; a scholarly one, *Totem and Taboo*; and a modernist novel, Thomas Mann's *Joseph in Egypt*. Yet, this deviation is only apparent. For these four texts do not stand as four versions of the same story, with the oldest one as the source and the others as rewritings. Their juxtaposition, rather, is a matter of method. Instead of following the usual path of exposing a theory which is then applied to the text, I have juxtaposed and mixed four different texts in order to illuminate the one through the confrontation with the others.

Thus, the etching points to elements in Genesis 39 which might remain unnoticed otherwise, such as the sense of imprisonment beyond the physical prison, and the structure of authority in which the woman, too, is locked up. Mann's novel raises the issue of the isolation of the female subject that retrospectively sheds new light on Genesis. Freud's text, the most mythical one he wrote, helps to understand how myth operates and, therefore, how the story of Genesis 39 could come to represent a story, a structure, that might not at all be central or even present in the text. Thus we understand what mythical thinking does to social issues like the standardization of views on gender.

My increasing semiotic scepticism would today distance myself somewhat from the affirmative discourse I use in the essay. But removing those symptoms of my own intellectual history would be another way of mythifying: taking ideas out of their initial, tentative formulations reifies them and contributes to the myth that ideas are eternal. And that is precisely what this essay works against. So I will have to leave it as it is, and leave it to the reader to frame it properly, as a work of someone standing at a crossroad and not knowing as yet where to go.

Appendix 1: Totem and Taboo *by Sigmund Freud*[*]

Let us now envisage the scene of such a totem meal and let us embellish it further with a few probable features which could not be adequately considered before. Thus we have the clan, which on a solemn occasion kills its totem in a cruel manner and eats it raw, blood, flesh and bones. At the same time the members of the clan disguised in imitation of the totem, mimic it in sound and movement as if they wanted to emphasize their common identity. There is also the conscious realization that an action is being carried out which is forbidden to each individual and which can only be justified through the participation of all, so that no one is allowed to exclude himself from the killing and the feast. After the act is accomplished the murdered animal is bewailed and lamented. The death lamentation is compulsive, being enforced by the fear of a threatening retribution, and its main purpose is, as Robertson Smith remarks on an analogous occasion, to exculpate oneself from responsibility for the slaying.

But after this mourning there follows loud festival gaiety accompanied by the unchaining of every impulse and the permission of every gratification. Here we find an easy insight into the nature of the *holiday* (p. 181).

By basing our argument upon the celebration of the totem we are in a position to give an answer. One day[1] the expelled brothers joined forces, slew and ate the father, and thus put an end to the father horde. Together they dared and accomplished what would have remained impossible for them singly. Perhaps some advance in culture, like the use of a new weapon, had given them the feeling of superiority. Of course these cannabalistic savages ate their victim. This violent primal father had surely been the envied and feared model for each of the brothers. Now they accomplished their identification with him by devouring him and each acquired a part of his strength. The totem feast, which is perhaps mankind's first celebration, would be the repetition and commemoration of this memorable, criminal act with which so many things began, social organization, moral restrictions and religion (p. 183).[2]

[*] Trans. A.A. Brill; New York: Vintage Books, 1946.

1. The reader will avoid the erroneous impression which this exposition may call forth by taking into consideration the concluding sentence of the subsequent chapter.

2. The seemingly monstrous assumption that the tyrannical father was overcome and slain by a combination of the expelled sons has also been accepted by Atkinson as a direct result of the conditions of the Darwinian primal horde. 'A youthful band of brothers living together in forced celibacy, or at most in polyandrous relation with some single female captive. A horde as yet weak in their impubescence they are, but they would, when strength was gained with time, inevitably wrench by combined attacks,

Appendix 2: Joseph and his Brothers *by Thomas Mann*[*]

Again Mut-em-enet had beckoned and he who now appeared on the scene was the cup-bearer, the pourer of the wine—it was Joseph. Yes, the lovesick woman had commanded him to this service, requesting, as his mistress, that he should himself serve the wine of Cyprus to her guests. She did not tell him of her other preparations, he did not know for what purpose of edification he was being used. It pained her, as we know, to deceive him and deliberately make such misuse of his appearance. But her heart was set on enlightening her friends and laying bare her feelings. So she said to him—just after he had once more, with all possible forbearance, refused to lie with her:

'Will you then, Osarsiph, at least do me a favour, and pour out the famous Alashian wine at my ladies' party day after tomorrow? In token of its excelling goodness, also in token that you love me a little, and lastly to show that I am after all somebody in this house, since he at its head serves me and my guests?'

'By all means, my mistress', he had answered. 'That will I gladly do, and with the greatest pleasure, if it be one to you. For I am with body and soul at your command in every respect save that I sin with you.'

So, then, Rachel's son, the young steward of Petepre, appeared

renewed again and again, both wife and life from the paternal tyrant' (*Primal Law*, pp. 220-21). Atkinson, who spent his life in New Caledonia and had unusual opportunities to study the natives, also refers to the fact that the conditions of the primal horde which Darwin assumes can easily be observed among herds of wild cattle and horses and regularly lead to the killing of the father animal. He then assumes further that a disintegration of the horde took place after the removal of the father through embittered fighting among the victorious sons, which thus precluded the origin of a new organization of society; 'An ever recurring violent succession to the solitary paternal tyrant by sons, whose parricidal hands were so soon again clenched in fratricidal strife' (p. 228). Atkinson, who did not have the suggestions of psychoanalysis at his command and did not know the studies of Robertson Smith, finds a less violent transition from the primal horde to the next social stage in which many men live together in peaceful accord. He attributes it to maternal love that at first only the youngest sons and later others too remain in the horde, who in return for this toleration acknowledge the sexual prerogative of the father by the restraint which they practise towards the mother and towards their sisters.

So much for the very remarkable theory of Atkinson, its essential correspondence with the theory here expounded, and its point of departure which makes it necessary to relinquish so much else.

I must ascribe the indefiniteness, the disregard of time interval, and the crowding of the material in the above exposition to a restraint which the nature of the subject demands. It would be just as meaningless to strive for exactness in this material as it would be unfair to demand certainty here.

[*] Trans. H.T. Lowe-Porter; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984 (1943).

suddenly among the ladies as they sat peeling in the court; in a fine white festal garment, with a coloured Mycenaean jug in his hands. He bowed, and began to move about, filling the cups. But all the ladies, those who had chanced to see him before as well as those who did not know him, forgot at the sight not only what they were doing but themselves as well, being lost in gazing at the cup-bearer. Then those wicked little knives accomplished their purpose and the ladies, all and sundry, cut their fingers frightfully—without even being aware at the time, for a cut from such an exceedingly sharp blade is hardly perceptible, certainly not in the distracted state of mind in which Eni's friends then were.

This oft-described scene has by some been thought to be apocryphal, and not belonging to the story as it happened. But they are wrong; for it is the truth, and all the probabilities speak for it. We must remember, on the one hand, that this was the most beautiful youth of his time and sphere; on the other, that those were the sharpest little knives the world had ever seen—and we shall understand that the thing could not happen otherwise—I mean with less shedding of blood—than as it actually did. Eni's dreamlike certainty of the event and its course was entirely justified. She sat there with her suffering air, her brooding, sinister, masklike face and sinuous mouth, and looked at the mischief she had worked; the blood-bath, which at first no one saw but herself, for all the ladies were gaping in self-forgotten ardour after the youth as he slowly disappeared toward the pillared hall, where, Mut knew, the scene would repeat itself. Only when the beloved form had disappeared did she inquire of the ensuing stillness, in a voice of malicious concern:

'My loves, what ever has happened to you all? What are you doing? Your blood is flowing!'

It was a fearful sight. With some the nimble knife had gone an inch deep in the flesh and the blood did not ooze, it spouted. The little hands, the golden apples, were drenched with the red liquid, it dyed the fresh whiteness of the linen garments and snaked through into the women's laps, making pools which dripped down on the floor and their little feet. What an outcry, what wails, what shrieking arose when Mut's hypocritical concern made them aware what had happened! Some of them could not bear the sight of blood, especially their own; they threatened to faint and had to be restored with oil of wormwood and other pungent little phials brought by the bustling maids. All the needful things were done; the neat little maids dashed about with cloths and basins, vinegar, lint and linen bandages, until the party looked more like a hospital ward than anything else, in the pillared hall as well, whither Mut-em-enet went for a moment to assure herself that blood was flowing there too. Renenutet, the wife of the overseer of bulls, was among the more seriously wounded; they had to quench the flow of blood by putting a tourniquet on the wrists to shut off the circulation from the slowly

paling and yellowing little hand. Likewise Nes-ba-met, Beknechon's deep-voiced consort, had done herself considerable damage. They had to take off her outer garment, and she was tended and reassured by two of the girted maids, one black and one white, while she raved and raged in a loud voice at everybody indiscriminately.

'Dearest Head Mother and all of you my dear friends', said the hypocrite Mut, when order had somewhat been restored, 'how could it happen that here in my house you have done this to yourselves, and this red episode has marred my party? To your hostess it is almost intolerable that it had to be in my house that it happened—how is such a thing possible? One person, or even two, might cut their fingers while peeling an orange—but all of you at once, and some of you to the bone! Such a thing has never happened before in the world, and will probably be unique in the social life of the two lands—at least, let us hope so! But comfort me, my sweethearts, and tell me how ever it could happen!' (pp. 802-803).

Appendix 3: Genesis 39

Working	*Translation*
1.	And Joseph was brought down to Egypt and bought him Potiphar, a eunuch of Pharaoh, a leader of the guard, a man of Egypt, from the hand of the Ishmaelites who had brought him from there.
2.	And it came to pass [that] Yahweh [was] with Joseph and it came to pass [that he was] a man [whom god] made successful and it came to pass [that he was] in the house of his master the Egyptian.
3.	And saw his master that Yahweh [was] with him and all that he was doing Yahweh made successful in his hand.
4.	And Joseph found grace in his eyes and he served him and he made him supervisor over his house and all that [was] onto him he gave in his hand.
5.	And it came to pass from the time [that] he had made him supervisor over his house and over all that [was] onto him and blessed Yahweh the house of the Egyptian for the sake of Joseph and it came to pass that the blessing of Yahweh [was] upon all that [was] onto him in the house and in the field.
6.	And he left all that [was] onto him in the hand of Joseph and not knew he with him anything except the bread that he was eating and it came to pass that Joseph [was] beautiful of appearance and beautiful of face.

7. And it came to pass after these things and lifted up the woman of his master her eyes upon Joseph and she said, lie with me.
8. And he refused himself and said to the woman of his master: behold, my master knows not with me what [is] in the house and all that [is] onto him he gave into my hand.
9. No one [is] greater in this house than me and not kept he back from me anything except you because you [are] his woman and how shall I do this great wickedness and sin against God?
10. And it came to pass when she spoke to Joseph day by day and not he heard to her to lie with her [or] to be with her.
11. And it came to pass on such a day and he went to the house to do his work and no man of the men of the house [was] there in the house.
12. And she caught him by his garment in saying lie with me and he left his garment in her hand and he fled and went outside.
13. And it came to pass when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled outside.
14. And she called unto the men of her house and said to them saying: see, he made come to us a Hebrew man to laugh at us, he has come to me to lie with me and I called in a loud voice.
15. And it came to pass when he heard that/because I lifted my voice and called and he left his garment with me and he fled and went outside.
16. And she laid his garment by her until came his lord in his house.
17. And she spoke to him according to these words saying: he came to me the Hebrew servant which you made come to us to laugh at me.
18. And it came to pass that I lifted my voice and I called and he left his garment by me and he fled outside.
19. And it came to pass when his master heard the words of his woman which she spoke unto him saying: according to his words did unto me your servant and his nose burnt/his anger rose.
20. And Joseph's master took him and gave him in the closed house, a place where the bound ones of the king were bound and he was there in the closed house.
21. And it came to pass [that] Yahweh [was] with Joseph and extended to him favour/solidarity and he gave him mercy in the eyes of the leader of the closed house.

22. And the leader of the closed house gave in the hand of Joseph all the bound ones who [were] in the closed house and all that they were doing there he was the doer.
23. And not the leader of the closed house was seeing all that [was] in his hand because Joseph [was] with him and what *he* did Yahweh made successful.

King James Translation

1. And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Pot-i-phar, an officer of Pharaoh captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ish-mae-lites, which had brought him down thither.
2. And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.
3. And his master saw that the LORD *was* with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand.
4. And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all *that* he had he put into his hand.
5. And it came to pass from the time *that* he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.
6. And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was *a* goodly *person*, and well favoured.
7. And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me.
8. But he refused, and said unto his master's wife. Behold, my master wotteth not what *is* with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand;
9. *There is* none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back anything from me but thee, because thou *art* his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?
10. And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie with her, *or* to be with her.
11. And it came to pass about this time, that *Joseph* went into the house to do his business; and *there was* none of the men of the house there within.
12. And she caught him by his garment saying, Lie with me:

and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.

13. And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth.

14. That she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice:

15. And it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out.

16. And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home.

17. And she spake unto him according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant, which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me:

18. And it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled out.

19. And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled.

20. And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners *were* bound: and he was there in the prison.

21. But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

22. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that *were* in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer *of it*.

23. The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing *that was* under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and *that* which he did, the LORD made *it* to prosper.

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ISBN 1 85075 420 9

Sheffield Academic Press